

Foreign Ministry identifies released prisoners

AMMAN (Petra) — The Foreign Ministry on Friday released the names of the eight Jordanian prisoners Kuwait pardoned last week. The names of these prisoners are: Abdul Rahman Sa'd Al Hussein, Imad Mahmoud Nimer, Mamoun Mahmoud Masoud, Imad Sami Thari, Ahmad Eid Mustafa, Osama Suhail Abdullah Al Hassan, Mamoun Omar Saleh and Hamdeh Asa'd Yunes. Also Friday, Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khatib sent a cable of congratulations to Kuwaiti Emir Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sahah on Kuwait's national day. Khatib thanked the Kuwaiti emir and government for pardoning the prisoners.

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Three Palestinian women killed by van in Israel

BEERSHEVA (AFP) — Three Palestinian women from the Gaza Strip were struck and killed by an Israeli driver early Thursday as they crossed a road in southern Israel, police said. The three women were struck by a van after they got off a bus and tried to cross a highway in the western Negev region near the Gaza Strip, a police spokesman said. The Israeli driver was slightly hurt and was questioned by police. According to a preliminary investigation, the driver failed to see the three women due to the early morning darkness and a light fog in the area, police said.

Czech, Polish leaders ratify NATO membership

PRAGUE (R) — Czech President Vaclav Havel and President Aleksander Kwasniewski of Poland, in a live television link-up broadcast in both countries, gave final approval on Friday to the former Soviet bloc allies joining NATO. But, in an embarrassing move, a protester disrupted the solemn event, blowing a whistle while holding up a burning card bearing the NATO symbol. He was quickly hustled out of Prague castle's throne room where Havel was delivering a brief speech. Just before the protest, the two leaders simultaneously signed into law the decisions to join the alliance which had previously been taken by their parliaments. Havel hailed the document as "of truly historic significance."

Police find IRA explosives

BELFAST (AP) — Police searching for IRA arms dumps on Friday found several mortar tubes, explosives and bomb-making equipment in both parts of Ireland. Northern Ireland police uncovered a dump containing a heavy mortar with shells and about 100 kilograms of home-made explosives, plus timers and power units used to trigger bombs, just off the main Belfast-Londonderry highway near the predominantly Catholic town of Dungiven. And just across the border in the Irish Republic, police found several home-made barrels — typically used to launch shells from the backs of trucks at British military installations — hidden in an isolated farmhouse in county Cavan.

New mad cow case in Switzerland

APPENZEL (AFP) — A new case of "mad cow" disease was reported in central Switzerland, bringing to four the number of cases reported this year, cantonal veterinary services said Friday. Fourteen new cases of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) were counted last year in Switzerland. BSE has been linked to a fatal brain condition in humans.

Family shot to death in Argentina

BUENOS AIRES (AP) — A family of six, including two children, was shot to death while asleep at their home in a Buenos Aires suburb, police said Friday. Two other family members were wounded during the attack at Lomas de Zamora, south of the Argentine capital. Elva Suarez, 39, a Uruguayan citizen, went to a hospital early Friday with a bullet wound in her leg. She told police that three men whom she did not know had kicked down the door of her house at dawn and started firing.

Israeli prime minister arrives for talks with King on Sunday

Government awaits clarification of Netanyahu's remarks

By Amy Henderson

AMMAN — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will arrive in Amman tomorrow for talks with His Majesty King Abdullah, but statements by the Israeli premier just ahead of his visit — his first to the country since King Hussein's funeral — already may have thrown a wet blanket on the affair. Netanyahu, speaking to students at the night-wing Bar Ilan University in Tel Aviv on Thursday, said Jordan was the only state in the region to back Iraqi President Saddam Hussein during the 1990-91 Gulf War, when Iraq rained down 39 missiles on Israel, mostly in the Tel Aviv area. Agency France Presse quoted Netanyahu as saying, "In 1991, who joined [Saddam] first? It was King Hussein of Jordan — the knight of peace."

"Why did he do that? Because Iraq was strong. And Iraq in 1991 was a little grain of sand compared to the Iraq equipped with nuclear weapons, and this puts a threat on our eastern border."

AFP said Netanyahu raised

the possibility that King Abdullah or his successor could abandon the historic Jordan-Israel peace treaty signed in 1994 in favour of an alliance with Iraq.

"We will find ourselves with an Iraqi threat on the Jordanian border," Netanyahu was quoted as saying.

The premier took the scenario one step further, raising the spectre of a hostile Jordanian-Iraqi alliance with the Palestinians in the West Bank that would result in what Netanyahu described as "Iraqi control of the Tel Aviv suburbs to Baghdad."

Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khatib yesterday said Jordan was seeking clarification from the Israeli prime minister's office and was waiting to see the official text of the speech.

"We find these statements aired by the media about Jordan strange in principle," Khatib said. "In light of contradiction among [published] reports, the government is waiting for further clarification and the official transcript of Netanyahu's statement in order to determine our position."

Officials yesterday speaking on condition of anonymity

said that the atmosphere of official meetings — also to be attended by Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh, Khatib and his Israeli counterpart Ariel Sharon — will depend on Israel's further clarification of Netanyahu's statements.

One official described the statements as "nasty and, unless they can be put into context, unacceptable to us."

Netanyahu's words seemed to contrast the spirit of those spoken by King Abdullah last week during a meeting with visiting leaders of American Jewish organisations. During the meeting, the King said he considered himself "a brother of Israel" and was eager to see bilateral ties grow stronger.

Malcolm Hoenlein, vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organisations, said the King indicated he was "looking forward to working with Netanyahu" and spoke warmly of Jordan's ties to Israel, according to a report carried in the New York Times.

Netanyahu's visit will be his first with King Abdullah, except for a brief encounter with the Monarch at King Hussein's funeral. A senior official told the Jordan Times that talks are likely to focus on the lack of progress in implementing the Wye River agreement, signed in Washington last October between Israel and the Palestinians, and brokered at the eleventh hour by King Hussein.

"Officials will be discussing the importance to Jordan of seeing serious progress in the implementation of those agreements," the official said.

During a visit of Israeli officials to Jordan in November, HRH Prince Hassan, Tarawneh and Sharon touched on sticky final status issues, with Jordan insisting that it be kept abreast of all Palestinian-Israeli final status discussions and emphasising that the Kingdom's strategic interests figure in any permanent peace deal reached.

The official source said, however, that "there will be no room for detailed discussion" on final status issues this time around owing to Israel's failure to fully implement the Wye deal and to Israel's May elections, which have further hamstrung any progress in the peace process.

(Continued on page 2)

PNA policeman executed hours after conviction

GAZA CITY (AFP) — A Palestinian firing squad executed a police colonel overnight just hours after he was convicted and condemned to death for raping a six-year-old boy, officials said on Friday.

It was the third execution of a policeman authorised by Palestinian National Authority (PNA) President Yasser Arafat in six months, and the action drew sharp protests from Palestinian human rights activists.

Colonel Ahmad Atiyah Abu Mustafa, 48, was arrested Wednesday after the boy from the southern Gaza town of Khan Yunis identified him as the man who kidnapped and raped him five days earlier, police officials told AFP.

Abu Mustafa, who served in

the border guard corps, denied the charges.

But a military court martial held late Thursday convicted the officer and sentenced him to 15 years in prison for the rape itself and handed down the death penalty for "gravely disturbing public order."

Hundreds of Khan Yunis residents had burned tyres and blocked roads in the town Wednesday and Thursday in protest over the rape and to press demands for Abu Mustafa's execution.

The officer was killed by a firing squad around midnight in the courtyard of the Gaza City police headquarters.

The execution was attended by several PNA officials and members of the Legislative Council as well as relatives of

the raped child, officials said.

The independent Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, which initially made the rape case public, swiftly condemned Abu Mustafa's lightning trial and execution and demanded that capital punishment be outlawed.

"We are deeply concerned about the execution of this officer and fear that capital punishment could become a routine method adopted by the PNA," the centre said in a written statement.

The group also denounced the "hushed and unfair" trial which it said did not permit Abu Mustafa to prepare a proper defence.

"We believe there are more effective preventive punishments than execution," it said.

Palestinian military courts have handed down 24 death sentences since the autonomy government was created in 1994, 18 of them against members of the various Palestinian security services, according to Bassem Eid, a human rights activist.

Arafat has only signed the death warrants against two of the condemned — brothers who worked in a Palestinian security unit and murdered two other men in a clan feud last August.

The two victims were members of Arafat's Fatah political movement and their murder sparked a wave of street protests by relatives and Fatah militants demanding the killers be executed.



Lebanese students Friday wave their national flag inside the southern village of Arnoun. About 2,000 Lebanese students stormed through the barbed wire barricades into Arnoun, the stranded village which Israel last week incorporated into the zone its troops occupy in south Lebanon (AFP photo)

Civilians storm barricades at occupied Lebanese village

Agencies

CIVILIANS ACTED directly against Israel's occupation of south Lebanon for the first time in years Friday, storming through barbed-wire barricades into Arnoun, the stranded village which Israel cordoned off last week.

Beirut university students led the 2,000 villagers and other protesters, many of them draped in Lebanese flags and chanting patriotic songs, who ignored the likely presence of a minefield and warning shots fired by the Israeli army.

"This is our land. We shall remain here and we call on all Lebanese students to come to Arnoun," said Samir Diab, an engineering student from the American University in Beirut.

"We have erected a tent and we are bringing in blankets," said Diab, who was sitting around one of two large fires lit at nightfall to fend off the cold mountain weather in Arnoun.

"Lebanon holds Israel responsible for any harm inflicted on Lebanese civilians in Arnoun," President Emile Lahoud was quoted as saying by the national news agency.

Lahoud had asked Lebanon's representative to the International Truce Moni-

toring Committee to relay the warning through the president of the panel, American Richard Erdmann.

Later Friday, Israel agreed to remove barbed-wire barricades around Arnoun, a Lebanese official told AFP.

The decision was relayed to Lebanon's representative to the International Truce Monitoring Committee, Colonel Maher Tufaili, through the president Erdmann, he said.

Erdmann told Tufaili that Israel has agreed to "remove the barbed wire and refrain from putting it back up," he said.

The Israeli delegate to the truce committee asked Erdmann to request the Lebanese authorities to "stop the gatherings and disturbances" in Arnoun, he said.

But Tufaili refused such conditions, asserting that "Lebanon rejects any promise or guarantee which could harm the resistance activities." Prime Minister Salim Hoss hailed the "dignified march which defied the Israeli siege of Arnoun with bare hands."

"This was a great heroic act of defence for a legitimate national right and an expression of steadfastness by the nation. We bow before this majestic act and we bless its

heroes," Hoss told reporters.

The state-run Tele-Liban station showed footage of the "student revolt" which was greeted with hugs, kisses and dancing by the 100 residents who had stayed behind in Arnoun, most of them women, children and the elderly.

The television, which broadcast patriotic songs throughout the day calling for the liberation of the south, also showed students ripping down the barbed wire and waving Lebanese flags jubilantly.

The group was joined by people from nearby villages who arrived in a procession led by parliamentarians from the Shiite Muslim Amal Movement, which has launched occasional anti-Israeli attacks in south Lebanon.

From atop mosques' minarets, Shiite dignitaries were calling for everyone to go to Arnoun to support the protesters "who broke the wall of fear and the siege imposed by the Israelis" there.

Israeli soldiers and troops from the Israel-allied South Lebanon Army (SLA) laid barbed wire around Arnoun on Feb. 17, preventing entry or exit from the village except through the Israeli-occupied zone.

Reformers well-placed amid large turnout in Iranian elections

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran's first-ever municipal elections drew a large turnout across the capital Friday, particularly among young people, leaving supporters of reformist President Mohammad Khatami well-placed in their key battle with hardline opponents.

Already substantial in the morning, the turnout grew even heavier in the afternoon at voting stations visited by AFP, prompting the authorities to extend polling by several hours in Tehran and other major cities.

In the first official indication of the level of participation, Interior Minister Abdolvahed Musavi-Lari said it had been "heavy" although he gave no figures.

Young people, who have the vote here from age 15 and helped sweep Khatami to his shock election victory in 1997, were particularly in evidence at the polling stations.

Many said they had voted for former Vice President Abdullah Nouri and his main list of reformist candidates in the capital.

"The very fact that the conservatives tried to disqualify him right up to the last minute was what persuaded me to go and vote for him," said one young voter outside a polling



A little girl waits for her mother to vote at other women look at a list of candidates Friday in a polling station in central Tehran (AP photo)

station in the plush north of the capital.

An 11th-hour bid by the conservative-dominated election supervision council to bar a dozen reformers including Nouri from standing in the capital was only resolved by the intervention of the president less than 24 hours before polls opened.

In working class districts as well, large numbers of women and young people turned out to vote, in Eslamshahr, a poor dormitory town to the south of

the capital, residents estimated that three-quarters of the votes were going to reformers.

For the first time four candidates from the banned but tolerated liberal opposition were standing for election in the capital on a joint list with other moderates.

Freedom Movement of Iran leader Ibrahim Yazdi told BBC Radio he hoped the vote would lead to official recognition.

(Continued on page 2)

Injured embassy employee transferred to Israel

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — An Israeli embassy staff member who was seriously injured in an accidental shooting Wednesday was taken to Israel yesterday for further treatment, a spokesman for the Amman mission said.

Embassy press attaché Roey Gilad said Sork Gefen, 24, was in "stable" condition following

surgery at the Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery to remove a bullet from his chest.

"He did not shoot himself, and the incident was accidental," Gilad said, declining to give further information.

Jordanian security officials said Gefen, an embassy security guard, was shot once in the chest by one of his colleagues on the embassy's premises in the Al Rabia neighbourhood.

"We do not know how it happened, nor who shot him, but there was a delay in bringing him to the hospital," an official told the Jordan Times.

The embassy has withheld the identity of the employee. Hospital Director Daoud Hanania told reporters following the surgery Wednesday that the bullet had settled in the right side of Gefen's chest, close to his heart.

"The bullet ruptured one of the blood arteries near the heart and settled near the patient's spine. Blood circulation to the brain was cut for 40 minutes following the incident," Hanania said.

Hanania described Gefen's post-surgery condition as "very serious," adding that he may have suffered "serious brain damage."

U.S. rights report notes Mideast abuses, progress

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Human rights remain under constant threat in the Middle East and parts of Africa, but the U.S. State Department noted some progress in its annual rights report released here Friday.

The report for 1998 registered improvements in human rights in Egypt, Iran and Syria as well as in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza.

It also noted improvements in Algeria but said Iraq and Sudan were among perpetrators of the worst kinds of basic human rights violations.

It specifically castigated Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein for pursuing a brutal campaign of repression against political opponents and Shiite Muslims.

The report said Saddam had executed more than 3,000 peo-

ple since 1997, 500 of them in the last three months of 1998.

His regime "continued its brutal campaign of executing perceived political opponents and leaders in the Shia religious community," it said.

Sudan was accused of numerous and repeated abuses stemming from Khartoum's brutal efforts to quash religious and political dissent.

"The government's human rights record remained extremely poor, and it continued to commit numerous, serious abuses," said the report, referring to "extrajudicial execution, disappearances, torture, beatings, harassment and arbitrary arrest and detention."

In Algeria, respect for human rights remained weak, and the report spoke of litany of abuses by both sides in the conflict

between government forces and Islamist insurgents.

The government's human rights record "remained poor, although there were improvements in some areas," the report noted.

Iran's record also remained poor and human rights were subject to "systematic abuses."

However, the report also picked up on "some improvements in a few areas," particularly that of freedom of expression, although even this step forward had been halted at year-end.

Fundamental human rights were denied to Syrians in 1998, the report said, by a political system that "places virtual absolute authority in the hands of President Hafez Assad."

However progress was registered, and the report noted that

there were no political killings and no confirmed reports of politically motivated disappearances.

In Egypt, human rights abuses were rare, the report noted, and democracy was resuscitated by the ruling party's iron grip on power.

"The government continued to commit numerous and serious human rights abuses, although its record improved somewhat over the previous year," the report said.

In the West Bank and Gaza Strip, improvements have been noted although both Israel and the Palestinian National Authority were blamed for continued abuses, with both sides resorting to torture.

[The full text of the report is available on the Internet at <http://www.state.gov>]

Friday, February 27, 1999
IN BRIEF



Mourners place candles near the tomb of the late King Hussein on Thursday in a special memorial (Photo by Yousef Al 'Allan)

Candlelight memorial held for King Hussein

AMMAN (AP) — About 1,000 Jordanians carrying candles walked slowly through Amman at nightfall Thursday to pay their respects at the billtop tomb of King Hussein.

Meanwhile, representatives of the country's one million labour unionists pledged allegiance to King Hussein's eldest son, His Majesty King Abdullah, in a move reflecting growing public confidence in the new monarch.

King Hussein died of cancer on Feb. 7.

The pledge of allegiance to King Abdullah, 37, came in a letter issued Thursday at a meeting of 30 representatives of the Kingdom's 17 labour syndicates.

"On behalf of the one million workers throughout the Kingdom, I am honoured. Your Majesty, to pledge allegiance and sin-

cere loyalty to your Hashemite Throne," said the letter, signed by the syndicates' president Mazen Ma'aytah.

Such a pledge underlines growing public confidence in the career army officer who spent the last 10 years as the commander of the elite Special Forces charged with internal security.

He represented King Hussein in several state functions at home and abroad.

In the 5-kilometer (3-mile) walk from Amman's Nuzha district to the Royal Palaces compound, the candle marchers, mostly women and children in black, chanted: "There is no god but One and Hussein is his loved one."

The march was organized by the Saudi-Jordanian Committee for Culture, but Jordanians from all walks

of life joined it: bedouin tribesmen in headdresses and head-toe robes and others in jeans, T-shirts and baseball caps.

They marched through the black gates of the Royal compound to the cemetery where loudspeakers broadcast verses from the Holy Koran.

At the grave, women and children knelt to the ground to place hundreds of lit candles near the tomb, illuminating thousands of wreaths and pictures of King Hussein blanketing the tomb.

One of the marchers, Zeinab Bakri, 26, said tearfully that the candle burning was a tradition to bid farewell to a loved one.

"He was the light of our life when he was alive and now we give him light to light his path to heaven," she sobbed.

Britain, NHF sign accord to train trainers

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Noor Al Hussein Foundation and the British government have signed a two-year agreement to provide support to NHF's Institute for Child Health and Development.

The agreement, signed Thursday, stipulates that Britain's Department for International Development (DFID) will aid the institute through "Training of Trainers" programmes for Ministry of Health medical staff. The training will involve educating health-care workers on the prevention and early detection of childhood disabilities.

The agreement was signed by British Ambassador to Jordan Christopher Battiscombe and Noor Al Hussein Foundation Executive Director Sima Bahous.

The NHF will draw on the institute's experience for the last decade, an NHF statement said.

Bahous said Thursday that "According to

the World Health Organisation, 70 per cent of disability needs can be met through inexpensive techniques and proper training in prevention, early detection, and rehabilitation. NHF is playing a leading role in addressing this need in Jordan and the region."

NHF's Institute for Child Health and Development was established in 1986 to support national efforts to raise child health-care standards in Jordan by improving growth monitoring, diagnosis, and treatment practices.

The institute includes a model Mother and Child Health Clinic and a Child Development Unit. The two units provide development assessment and supervision of minor to moderate handicaps, and design programmes to improve the monitoring of the physical health and psycho-social needs of children.

Government to survey goat population ahead of measures to fend off drought

By Ahmad Khatib

AMMAN — The Cabinet has decided to conduct a one-day survey on Thursday to count goat heads and assess their geographic distribution in order to take effective measures to help livestock breeders cope with the officially-declared state of drought, officials said Friday.

Several committees have been formed for that purpose: a higher committee, including the General Statistics Department, and the ministries of interior and agriculture, a technical committee and a central committee responsible in each governorate.

More than 7,000 people in 1,100 sub-committees around the Kingdom will participate in the survey, which will be carried out from 6 a.m. until 5 p.m.

The Kingdom has incurred \$15 million in losses as a result of the drought, which has affected livestock. Drought conditions encourage the spread of diseases such as the dangerous, and often fatal, foot-and-mouth disease that plagues cloven-footed animals. The govern-

ment has launched a nationwide campaign against the highly-contagious disease, enzootic in the Middle East.

One million vaccination doses have been ordered from Turkey and France since the country's supplies against the disease were exhausted.

The government has appealed for food aid to assist farmers and underprivileged Jordanians.

One week ago, the World Food Programme (WFP) agreed to donate 8,000 tonnes of wheat to Jordan after a Jordanian delegation briefed a WFP meeting in Rome about the current obstacles facing the country.

Since the commencement of its operations in Jordan in 1964, the WFP has provided support to 32 development projects and 17 emergency operations in the Kingdom with aid worth about \$188 million.

At present, the country produces around 75,000 tonnes of wheat, less than 10 per cent of the annual domestic consumption. The Kingdom annually produces only 30,000 tonnes of the 500,000 tonnes of barley needed to feed cattle and 13,000 of the 15,000 tonnes of bran

required.

The U.S. also has agreed to give Jordan, at no cost, 100,000 metric tonnes, or \$13 million worth, of American wheat (see separate story).

In January, when a state of drought was officially declared, the government said it would create a fund to ensure JD12 million in interest-free loans to livestock breeders to help them buy barley and grain at reduced prices. State grazing reserves will be open to the public, while the ministries of water and irrigation and agriculture will provide water for livestock from desert wells. Water rationing will continue.

Grain prices have been reduced: barley has dropped from around JD100 per tonne to JD87 and bran from around JD95 per tonne to JD77.

These measures are designed to help breeders of over three million heads of livestock in Jordan provide feed for their animals.

Amounts of water designated for agricultural use are now rationed, while a ban on some crops that require high amounts of water is

under consideration. Water ration regulations for banana and citrus fruits are currently being studied, while summer crops such as mallow, eggplant and corn could be prohibited.

The Water Authority said it will reduce the amount of water pumped to the Southern Ghor for agricultural use by 50 per cent; to the Northern Ghor by 20 per cent; and to the Central Ghor by 10 per cent.

At present, around 650 million cubic metres (mcm) of water a year are used for agriculture, part of which is non-renewable, according to water experts.

Such regulations had drew the criticism of farmers and agricultural industry leaders, saying that the private sector and the whole industry will be harmed.

Up to date, the Kingdom's dams of 160 mcm capacity have collected 50 mcm.

The major increase was in the 72-mcm King Abdullah Dam, which received 35.9 mcm and the 16-mcm Wadi Arab Dam that got 11 mcm.

This year's drought is the worst since the 1950s, according to the Meteorological Department.

U.S. to give Jordan 100,000 tonnes of wheat

AMMAN (J.T.) — The U.S. has agreed to give Jordan, at no cost, 100,000 metric tonnes, or \$13 million worth, of American wheat.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will provide the shipment of grain in accordance with section 416b which allows the USDA to donate American wheat to eligible countries both through private voluntary organisations and through government to government agreements, such as the one signed Thursday by Ambassador William J. Burns and Planning Minister Nabil Amari.

"I think this [agreement] will help Jordan and the people of Jordan in several ways," Burns said. "First, the donation of wheat and the special fund that is created along with it, we estimate, will help as many as 200,000 needy Jordanians acquire food, shelter and clothing," he added.

"Secondly, the donation of American wheat will also help Jordan with its balance of payments problems and also with the budget deficit," Burns said.

"And third, I think at a time when Jordan faces possible water shortages and also pressures on the agricultural sector, donations of wheat are also a great help."

Prosecutor general to appeal court ruling on Al Majd weekly's suspension

By Mohammad Ben Hussein

AMMAN — The government will contest a Court of Appeals ruling which overturned a recent First Instance Court decision to suspend the opposition weekly Al Majd, Minister of Justice Jawdat Shoul told the Jordan Times, Friday.

"Within the next week the prosecutor general will appeal the court's ruling," said the minister.

However, several lawyers have ruled out the possibility of another court-ordered closure of Al Majd.

Lawyers have said that it is unlikely that the court would overrule the Appeals Court ruling, taken during an emergency session. The fact that the ruling was taken during an emergency session implies that the decision was urgent and irreversible, they said.

"Al Majd called for an emergency session to contest the Amman Court decision, and in this case, the Court of Appeal's decision is final even if the Court of Cassation rejects its ruling," said Salm Al Zu'bi, a lawyer.

Journalists last week hailed the Appeals Court decision as a victory for press freedoms, since the decision will allow the newspaper to continue publishing while its case is reviewed by the court.

According to Article 50 of the controversial Press and Publications Law of 1998, endorsed by both houses of Parliament last summer, the courts have a right to order closed any newspaper under investigation for violations of the law. The 1998 press law is the first to allow

any of the three authorities to order a paper to close. The 1998 press law received international condemnation for this and many other articles.

The opposition weekly Al Majd hit newsstands again after having been closed by the Amman Court of First Instance's order for five days. Last Monday, the Court of Appeal overturned the First Instance Court's decision to suspend the publication while its editor, Faded Rimawi, stands trial on charges of publishing slanderous information about the Royal family, insulting information about the prime minister and members of the government and attacking the integrity of the security service. Rimawi was detained on Feb. 4 and released on bail two days later.

The Appeals Court last week overruled for "technical reasons."

Khalil Khourama, managing editor of Al Majd, hailed "the justice and integrity of the Jordanian judiciary which proved once again to be a backer of freedom, rights and democracy."

Rimawi is the first journalist to stand trial under the 1998 Press and Publications Law — at the heart of international, regional and local criticism by press freedoms and human rights groups.

Journalists said Al Majd's brief ban appears to have created unease between the Jordan Press Association and the Press and Publications Department (PPD), which decided to take the case to court after the association failed to look into it.

PPD Director Iyad Qattan blamed the Jordan Press Association (JPA) for

breaking an agreement reached last summer with Information Minister Nasser Judeh that the JPA would review any case of legal or ethical violations referred to it by the PPD to refer to the association any professional violations committed by journalists, which in turn reserves the right to take punitive action against members through a special disciplinary council.

The deal was reached in line with government pledges to implement the controversial law in a amicable manner to ease tension sparked by the previous government's heavy-handed dealings with the press.

"The PPD referred various cases to the JPA's board which has failed to take any action," the Jordan News Agency, Petra, quoted Qattan as saying.

"This forced the PPD to send Al Majd to court," he added.

"It appears from statements made by JPA board members that their desire to win votes in future JPA elections is an obstacle in reviving the JPA's by-laws, especially the reactivation of the disciplinary council."

However, JPA President Self Sharif said the association had studied all cases referred to it.

"It appears that the association's measures did not appeal to Mr. Qattan and this is something that does not concern us as we cannot be the hangman of the press," he said.

"On the contrary, we deal with laws with a view to organising and unleashing general freedoms, not suppressing them and acting as prosecutors of journalists."

April marathon to raise funds for neurological patients

By Susan Resheq

AMMAN — The 7th annual Amman-Dead Sea Ultra Marathon will be held on April 9 to raise funds for patients suffering from neurological diseases.

The 50-kilometre charity marathon will be organised by the Amman Road Runners for the benefit of the Society for the Care of Neurological Patients.

HRH Prince Firas Ben Raad, His Majesty King Abdullah's adviser for health affairs, is president of the society which has so far spent JD61,480 on 69 neurological patients.

The Society for the Care of Neurological Patients funds neurological surgery for needy Jordanians as well as seeking to increase awareness of neurological disease, including epilepsy and multiple sclerosis.

"As the marathon's participants increased, it was thought that this would be an excellent opportunity to raise money for the charity and encourage more runners to take part," Reem Farkouh, Amman Road Runners representative, said at a press conference Tuesday.

Participants will kick off from the 7th Circle in Amman at 6:30 a.m., from where they will jog their way on down to the Dead Sea, the lowest point on earth.

Runners undergo a drop in altitude as they move towards their final destination, and along with it, they'll experience an increase in temperatures — from 15°C in Amman at 900 metres above sea level soaring to an average of 32°C at 400 metres below sea level.

But runners will be supplied with water every four kilometres.

"The ultra marathon will include 30 participants from 19 countries other than Jordan," Farkouh said.

Several leading Jordan-based enterprises, including LG electronics, Fastlink, and the Dead Sea Movenpick Hotel are sponsoring the event.

"But we are in need of more funds and we really appreciate everyone's participation in this fund-raising event to help us reach needed people," said Rafiq Hamarneh from the society.

Iraq seeks to expand bilateral trade

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraqi Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan said Thursday that Baghdad hopes to expand economic and trade cooperation with Jordan.

"Cooperation between Jordan and Iraq is well-established and developed and the Iraqi leadership is serious about continuing it in all domains," said Ramadan, quoted by the official INA news agency.

His comments came following a meeting here with Minister of Trade and Industry Mohammed Saleh Hourani, who arrived in Baghdad Wednesday for talks with Iraqi officials as well as a meeting of the joint Iraqi-Jordanian commission.

Jordan, which has no known crude reserves, has already agreed to import 4.8 million tonnes of Iraqi crude in 1999 as in past years, around half of which is delivered free while the rest sells for more than the current market price.

The bilateral trade deal has been exempt from U.N. sanctions imposed on Iraq following its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Jordan relies entirely on Iraq, its main bilateral trading partner, to meet its oil requirements.

Also Thursday, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein received opposition figure Leith Shbeilat Thursday, the INA reported. The agency gave no indication of the substance of the talks between Saddam Hussein and Shbeilat, former head of the Jordan Engineers Association who was jailed for nine months last May for his role in organising pro-Iraqi protests in the southern town of Ma'an in which one person was killed.

Sahab mayor proves a hit in San Ramon

By Michael Pena

SAN RAMON — Hamad Jaber, mayor of Sahab, has already noticed two things San Ramon has that his city in Jordan does not: prosperity and parks.

So who better to take him out on the town than the namesake of Athan Downs park. San Ramon Mayor Byron Athan? The unlikely pair met in an informal summit-of-sorts at City Hall last Monday morning.

Jaber's brother, Sameer Abu Zaid of San Ramon, arranged the mayoral meeting with city officials while Jaber is in town visiting family for two weeks. Sahab lies on the edge of a desert region about eight miles east of Amman.

Many residents in Sahab, population 50,000, make a living extracting minerals from the Dead Sea. But Jaber, elected in a 1997 public vote and his city's biggest industry is its people.

"Sahab doesn't have oil, it doesn't have gas," said Zaid, a senior engineer at a Fremont computer compa-

ny. "One of the things we can learn from San Ramon is how to attract business into Sahab."

However, his brother points out that Sahab is not all work and no play.

'One of the most needed things in a city the size of Sahab is public parks.'

"One of the most needed things in a city the size of Sahab is public parks," said Jaber, who has a doctorate from the University of Jordan and taught high school chemistry for 20 years before running for mayor.

Jaber's role was especially critical when King Hussein, Jordan's beloved leader for 47 years, died of cancer Feb. 7 at age 63. Hussein's stature as a leader in the Middle East was unquestioned, as shown by the outpouring of grief in Jordan and throughout the world.

"He built Jordan from the desert," said Jaber, who

saw to the city's slaughtering of sheep in Hussein's honour and the subsequent distribution of the meat to the needy.

"All Jordan is a family," as King Hussein says."

And that is what San Ramon's mayor said he can learn from his Jordanian counterpart. Athan, as mayor of a bustling suburb that has seen immense growth, said San Ramon is in need of more community spirit.

"There's always something to gain," said Athan, voted to a one-year mayoral term by fellow council men in November. "We're a new city, and they're a city that's a hundred years old."

Zaid, who came to the United States in 1985, goes back to Sahab every year with this family. He describes it as a safe but

somewhat poor community that, like the entire Middle East, exists under the shadow of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

"Hatred is one factor of the conflict; poverty is another," Zaid said. "Talking about peace is one thing; implementing peace is another thing."

Sahab's local government consists of an eight-member council and a mayor who serves for four years. Jaber, who came with his wife and parents, will stay with his brother another two weeks before visiting Reno and Lake Tahoe.

Athan invited Jaber to introduce himself to the city at a council meeting, and in turn, Jaber invited Athan to visit Sahab.

"He respectfully declined. I hadn't planned on it," Athan said. "This is new to me."

— Reprinted from the San Ramon Times

Condolences
The editor and staff of the
Jordan Times
mourn the passing of
Khalil Wabbeh
beloved father of our friend Hassan
Wabbeh and father-in-law of our
colleague Ica Wabbeh
May his soul rest in peace

Kosovo tensions rise, monitors held at border

PRISTINA, Serbia (R) — Tension mounted in Kosovo on Friday, as Yugoslav security forces deployed troops and armoured equipment and several international monitors were prevented from coming from Macedonia into the Serb province.

Meanwhile, Agency France Presse reported that clashes erupted Friday between Serb police and rebels of the Kosovo Liberation Army in the south of Kosovo province, a spokesman for the Kosovo Verification Mission in Prizren, Yugoslavia said.

At 3:40 p.m. (14:40 GMT), fighting was still taking place after beginning some 20 minutes earlier, KVM spokesman Simon Gerry said, adding he had no reports on casualties.

Eight employees of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) were forced to spend the night in their cars after being prevented from entering Kosovo, said Beatrice Lacoste, spokeswoman for the OSCE's Kosovo Verification Mission. Negotiations for their release were continuing.

International monitors said army and police troops were out in force around the central Suva Reka area, where the KVM managed to defuse a potentially violent standoff on Thursday.

"There is a large build up of Serb troops and artillery," a KVM monitor said. "There are tanks, APCs (armoured personnel carriers) and extra security forces deployed." The area, where the KVM managed to persuade ethnic Albanian guerrillas not to attack a police patrol on Thursday, is just a few kilometres away from Studencane, where fighting erupted on Saturday, forcing thousands to flee their homes.

A similar situation was reported around Vucitrn in northern Kosovo where sporadic fighting has flared over the past week.

On Thursday, tank, heavy machine gun, mortar and small arms fire broke out in the north of the province after the security forces deployed the full range of their heavy artillery in what they called a "winter training exercise."

An aid agency official said on Friday four ethnic Albanians had been wounded in Thursday's gunfire exchanges around Bukos.

Lacoste said three OSCE vehicles carrying international monitors had been refused entry into Kosovo from Macedonia on Thursday night.

A fourth vehicle, which came from Pristina with customs officials to negotiate their release, was also prevented from leaving the border area.



Serbian police patrol take a break in the village of Rastane, near Suva Reka, some 60 kms southwest of Pristina Friday. (AP photo)

The OSCE said two OSCE vehicles had been stopped by customs guards on the Yugoslav side of the border after crossing through the police checkpoint.

They demanded to check the car, and a British monitor refused, on the grounds the OSCE vehicles were granted diplomatic immu-

nity. A third vehicle came across later and was prevented from crossing into the Serbian province of Kosovo.

"This is against the Vienna Convention, the vehicles have diplomatic immunity," an OSCE spokesman said.

He said the OSCE employees, including three

international verifiers, were blocked in by other vehicles.

"They were also intimidated by civilians who arrived armed with AK 47s and went into the customs building. They left without their guns," he said.

Lacoste said negotiations for their release were still continuing. Efforts

overnight to contact Yugoslav officials who deal with the OSCE were unsuccessful.

The ethnic Albanian-run Kosovo Information Centre said on Friday fighting had broken out in some villages near the Macedonian border, forcing residents to flee. It could not be independently confirmed.

Russian police raid Moscow centre for Scientology

MOSCOW (AP) — Police seized boxes of documents from the Scientology Movement and questioned the group's leaders Friday, the latest in a series of government actions against religious groups in Russia.

Tax police and other security services spent 16 hours confiscating materials at the group's Moscow Centre Thursday and returned Friday morning to question the Scientologists, a controversial international spiritual organisation.

Authorities were searching rooms and preventing people from working, said Pirta Heldt, a consultant at the centre.

The tax police said they were investigating possible tax evasion and other financial irregularities, but the Scientologists said the move was politically motivated.

"Cruelty was in the air during this visit (by the tax police), which has reminded us that Russia has not yet acquired the right of freedom — freedom to think and act in accordance with the convictions of conscience," Alexei Danchenkov, a spokesman

for the group, said in a statement.

The Scientology Centre in Moscow is formally called the Humanitarian Hubbard Centre, named after the founder of Scientology, L. Ron Hubbard. It holds regular classes for both youths and adults, attracting about 200 students each week, according to Danchenkov.

Russian authorities have moved against a number of religious organisations following the passage of a 1997 law that placed widespread restrictions on "non-traditional" faiths.

The Russian Orthodox Church, the dominant religion, strongly supports the measure and often speaks out against religious groups that have been arriving in Russia since the Soviet breakup in 1991.

But human rights groups say the law is reminiscent of the anti-religion drives during the Soviet era, when the Communists decreed an official policy of atheism and many religious groups had to operate underground.

The current cases include: — In St.

Petersburg, more than 40 teachers and children at a Christian school have been holed up inside their building since Tuesday, under the eye of police in combat fatigues outside. The city gave the society of open Christianity a rent-free lease on the aging building in 1991, but are now demanding it back. The group wants a new site for their school.

— Moscow prosecutors are seeking to ban the Jehovah's Witnesses in an ongoing trial. Prosecutors have accused the group of "aggressive proselytism" and describe it as a cult that destroys families, fosters hatred and threatens lives.

— In the eastern city of Magadan, authorities have sought for months to close the word of life Pentecostal Church. A prosecutor has accused church leaders of hypnotising people, while tax police and the security services have conducted raids and interrogations. Earlier this month, 400 church members applied for asylum in the United States.

Human rights group says religious violence could affect Indonesia vote

AMBON, Indonesia (AP) — Soldiers fired warning shots Friday to disperse rioters who were burning houses in an Indonesian town that has been plagued by religious violence.

In another part of Ambon city, about 1,000 people protested peacefully outside the police headquarters to protest officers' shooting of brawling Muslim and Christian gang members.

And an international human rights group warned that violence in the Ambon area could widen national divisions ahead of parliamentary elections in June.

At least 24 people have died in unrest this week in and near the city of Ambon, the capital of Maluku province, and thousands of refugees have fled on boats.

Violence persisted for a fourth consecutive day Friday. Christian mobs threw stones at the homes of Muslim government officials, and smoke billowed from burning houses, witnesses said.

Security forces dispersed the crowds by firing volleys of gunshots. Some 3,500 Muslims were sheltering in a city

mosque Friday.

"We have nothing now," said one of the refugees, 37-year-old Rahma Suli, whose home was burned by rioters.

New York-based Human Rights Watch said the violence could exacerbate religious tensions across the predominantly Muslim Nation of 210 million people. The riots hit areas with large Christian populations.

The polarisation is likely to affect campaigning for the upcoming parliamentary elections scheduled for June, channeling political debate into communal issues, the human rights group said in a statement released Thursday.

The elections are expected to be the fairest in more than four decades, and follow the ouster last year of authoritarian President Suharto. However, there are fears of violence between rival political factions.

At the height of the Ambon fighting this week, mobs battled each other with swords, bows and arrows and gasoline bombs.

Soldiers fired on the rioters repeatedly in an attempt to disperse them. Human Rights Watch appealed for international

humanitarian assistance for the refugees and questioned the ability of the security forces to curb the unrest using non-lethal means.

"They are using live bullets and appear to be 'unequipped' to handle the kind of large-scale unrest they are facing," the group said.

Ambon is 2,250 kilometres east of Jakarta, the Indonesian capital.

Economic hardship, ethnic tensions, gang feuds and political rivalries have stirred unrest in Indonesia since the downfall of Suharto.

More than 150 people have died in rioting on several Maluku islands this year. In riots last month, more than 3,300 houses and two dozen churches and mosques were burned.

"Some national Muslim political parties see Ambon as evidence of Islam under siege by a Christian minority, resentful of its declining influence," Human Rights Watch said.

Many Indonesian Christians, meanwhile, see it as evidence of their increasingly precarious position in a Muslim majority state.

India government faces test over state rule

NEW DELHI (R) — India's fragile coalition government was headed Friday for a knife-edge vote in parliament over a controversial decision to impose direct rule in the eastern state of Bihar.

The government, which dismissed Bihar's opposition-led administration earlier this month after a wave of caste violence, has sought parliamentary approval in a vote that is expected to go down to the wire.

The government would not have to quit if it lost Friday's vote, but it would be the second time the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led coalition has been humiliated over Bihar, where it says law and order have broken down.

Last September, the federal government backed off after President K.R. Narayanan urged it to reconsider its recommendation to sack the provincial government in Bihar.

BJP spokesman Venkaiah Naidu said he was confident that the lower house of parliament would approve the resolution and was hoping for the crucial backing of a regional group, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP).

"By evening the Lok Sabha (lower house) will approve the resolution with regard to the resolution on Bihar and ending of Jungle Raj (the law of the jungle) in Bihar," he said.

Nearly a year after it took power, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's multi-party alliance is still perched on a wafer-thin majority in a fragmented parliament, and is racked

by internal dissent over a range of issues, including dismissal of state governments.

Vajpayee was expected to speak in the debate at around 4:00 p.m. (10:30 GMT) ahead of a vote in the evening.

The main opposition party, Congress, has led the challenge but a clutch of regional groups have traditionally opposed removal of elected provincial governments.

TDP, which bailed out the government in a trust vote last year, kept the political world in suspense.

The 12-member TDP group of lawmakers, which has consistently opposed the dismissal of state governments on grounds that the authority is abused to settle political scores, would decide on the vote Friday, party officials said.

"We will announce our decision at an appropriate time," Chandrababu Naidu, TDP chief and chief minister of Andhra Pradesh state, told reporters in the southern city of Hyderabad.

"The TDP faces a peculiar situation... But the TDP is also determined not to allow the BJP-led government is defeated on the floor of parliament on the Bihar issue," a senior TDP leader said.

The challenge to the government over Bihar has erupted a day before it presents the federal budget for 1999/2000 (April-March) to parliament.

Tempers flare over Gibraltar, again

LONDON (AFP) — Tempers flared again Friday over Gibraltar after talks between British Prime Minister Tony Blair and his Spanish counterpart Jose Maria Aznar.

The two met Thursday in Bonn ahead of an EU summit and agreed to hold an Anglo-Spanish summit to tackle tensions over the British territory on the southern tip of Spain.

Agreeing on a date of April 10-11, they also pledged to work together to resolve their differences and continue a dialogue started this week by their foreign ministers.

But in London, Spain and Gibraltar clashed again over the territory, which has been under British rule since 1713.

Jose Maria Robles Fraga, the foreign affairs spokesman for Spain's ruling popular party, branded Gibraltar a "parasite" on Spain, which is pressing its claim for sovereignty.

He said it was a "source of all kinds of difficulties," and claimed there were more than 50,000 companies there under "no fiscal control." "This is of course the way of more money-laundering," he told BBC radio.

But Gibraltar Chief Minister Pete Caruana hit back on the same programme, calling Fraga's comments "defamatory distortion."

"It is a tissue of lies which the British government is tired of telling the Madrid government is a tissue of lies," he said.

The claims were part of the Spanish campaign to take back sovereignty over Gibraltar, Caruana added.

"What do all these allegations, false and unsubstantiated and unjustified as they are... have to do with Gibraltar's sovereign status?"

Recent disputes between Spain and Britain over Gibraltar have centred on fishing rights, crime — Madrid claims it is a haven for tobacco and drugs smugglers, tax dodgers and money-launderers — as well as restrictive border controls on the Spanish side.

Blair's meeting Thursday with Aznar came ahead of the EU summit in Bonn, which started Friday. British and Spanish sources, seeking to cool tensions, said the talks had again underlined the

strong personal relationship between the premiers.

Sunday, British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook met Spanish counterpart Abel Matutes in Luxembourg and agreed to jointly examine Madrid's concerns over crime.

Matutes warned that Madrid wanted "action, not just words," over its fears about tobacco and drugs smuggling, money laundering and tax evasion.

Cook said they had committed themselves to further talks to ease tensions. "We want to work with Spain to establish a stronger partnership," he added.

But he admitted he had failed to win a firm commitment from Matutes to ending the restrictive border controls Madrid has imposed on the border with Gibraltar in retaliation over the fishing dispute.

The controls have forced residents of the territory, many of whom work in Spain, to endure delays of up to six hours at the border. Spaniards who work in Gibraltar have also registered protests.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Belgian police protest against reforms

BRUSSELS (AFP) — Up to 1,200 police and gendarmes took to the streets here Friday to protest against proposed reforms of the service which aim to phase out the 200-year-old gendarmerie by 2001, police said. Many of the protestors — who numbered only 700 according to the interior ministry — wore their uniforms, blew their service whistles, chanted slogans and waved banners denouncing the proposed merger of the two police branches as "undemocratic." The reform aims to replace the powerful gendarmerie, a military force carrying out police duties, and the criminal police with a new unified federal and local force. It would be the first major reform of Belgium's police force since the nation's confidence in its law enforcers was shaken by the botched investigation of child rapist Marc Dutroux two years ago.

Strong quake rocks northern Japan, no injuries reported

TOKYO (AP) — A strong earthquake rocked parts of northern Japan Friday, turning over shelves and tearing cracks into roads. But there were no reports of injuries. The quake, which struck at 2:18 p.m. (05:18 GMT), had a preliminary magnitude of 5.4. Its epicenter was 20 kilometres under the ocean floor just off the northwestern coast near the city of Sakata, 370 kilometres north of Tokyo. Police in Yamagata prefecture (state) said that some roads cracked, a brick wall collapsed and shelves toppled in supermarkets and homes. There were no reports of injuries, the official said, speaking on customary condition of anonymity. "We have not heard of any injuries or major damage in the area," said Sakata city official Chikaki Oda, adding the tremor knocked over some items on desks in her office but did not shatter anything. Shinkansen bullet train service on the Tohoku and Joetsu lines was briefly interrupted but resumed after no damage was detected, said an East Japan Railway Co. spokesman. There was no fear of Tsunami, or earthquake-caused waves, from the quake, the Japanese Meteorological Agency said. Japan is located along the Pacific "ring of fire," one of the most earthquake-prone regions of the world.

Afghan 'mystery' disease diagnosed as respiratory ailment — WHO

GENEVA (AFP) — A "mystery" disease that has caused more than 150 deaths in several remote Afghan villages has been initially identified as a respiratory ailment, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said Friday. A team which reached Jambabala in northeast Afghanistan to investigate said there was no evidence of plague, malaria, cholera and typhus, the who said in Geneva. There have been between 50 and 60 deaths in the village since Jan. 10. The suspicion is that that deaths were caused by secondary infections. The symptoms are those of influenza, the WHO said. Local health authorities had told the WHO that around 2,000 people in almost 20 villages had suffered from fever, aches, vomiting and diarrhoea, with at least 150 deaths. Health specialists plan to stay in the field until Sunday, the WHO said.

African states call for democratic Congo ceasefire

YAOUNDE (R) — Central African heads of state have called for a ceasefire in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the withdrawal of all foreign troops from the country. The leaders, who met in Cameroon on Thursday, also called on the parties in the Angolan civil war to respect the Lusaka peace accords and expressed concern over the nagging border dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria. In a statement released after the summit, the leaders said the Congo conflict threatened peace and stability across Africa and they called on the country's leaders to pursue dialogue and accelerate the democratic process. Congolese President Laurent Kabila was among the heads of state present. The rebels in his country are backed by Rwanda, whose foreign minister attended the summit, and by Uganda, which was not represented. The leaders of Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo Republic and Sao Tome and Principe were also present, in addition to Paul Biya, president of host Cameroon. Gabon was represented by its vice president and Equatorial Guinea by its prime minister. The leaders appealed to Nigeria and Cameroon to refrain from acts likely to raise tension ahead of a verdict on the dispute from the International Court of Justice in the Hague. Finally, they said armed robbery and banditry was rife in Central Africa and called on all countries in the region to take measures to prevent arms trafficking and the circulation of light weapons across their common borders.

FCC rules Internet calls are under federal jurisdiction

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has ruled that Internet access telephone calls are under federal jurisdiction, overruling state regulatory authorities that claimed they were local calls. The decision issued Thursday is not expected to affect Internet call pricing at the consumer level, but resolves a dispute among telephone companies over how to compensate each other for Internet connections. Internet access firms praised the decision as affirming contracts for connections with local telephone companies. "The FCC's decision should remove any lingering doubts about the validity of the current contracts," MCI Worldcom said in a statement. "As such, MCI Worldcom calls on the (local) bell companies to abandon their misguided efforts to renege on their legally binding agreements," the statement said.

Suspected cannibal goes on trial in Kyrgyzstan

MOSCOW (AP) — A man suspected of killing and eating his girlfriend and an apartment tenant went on trial Friday in the former Soviet republic of Kyrgyzstan, a news report said. The man, identified as Pavel Gorobets, is accused of cannibalising his girlfriend, Valentina Kashina, and his tenant, Vladimir Grekhovodov, the ITAR-TASS news agency quoted prosecutors as saying. Before the trial in the Kyrgyz capital of Bishkek, Gorobets also told investigators he had made dishes of the victims and fed them to a friend, according to the report. Police found parts of the dismembered bodies last April not far from the house where all three had once lived. The judge in the case said experts had found Gorobets mentally fit for trial. If convicted, he could face the death sentence or up to 20 years in prison.

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Sino-U.S. tension mounts ahead of Albright visit

BEIJING (AFP) — China on Friday attacked a U.S. Senate resolution condemning what it saw as Chinese human rights violations, adding to tensions ahead of a visit next week by U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

Trade, Taiwan and security have all caused protests between the two giants, and Albright faces an even tougher task after the U.S. Senate resolution which urged a United Nations deploring of China's rights record.

"The Chinese side expresses strong resentment and opposition to the resolution," China's foreign ministry said in a statement.

"The truth has been proven for many times that the human rights issue will not be resolved through confrontation."

"Some people in the United States try to interfere with China's internal affairs using the human rights issue. But it will definitely fail," it added.

"We hope the U.S. government will carefully and cautiously take a wise attitude to the issue."

The Senate approved a non-binding resolution Thursday urging the U.S. delegation at the United Nations to push for a U.N. resolution condemning China's rights record.

The United States and European Union last year refrained from tabling a U.N. resolution on Chinese human rights abuses, citing some improvements and an opening of dialogue with Beijing.

China is now a signatory to U.N. covenants on civil and political rights

and on economic, social and cultural rights.

China has, however, been clamping down on the banned China Democracy Party. It has recently jailed party founders for lengthy terms.

The U.S. resolution was the latest in a list of problems dogging the two countries just as Premier Zhu Rongji prepares to visit the United States in April.

China on Thursday protested against the U.S. veto of the sale of a high-tech satellite to a Chinese-led consortium, warning the move would worsen strained ties.

Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Zhang Qiyue warned the United States' "erroneous move" will have a negative effect on normal China-U.S. economic and trade exchanges and cooperation.

The United States, citing national security concerns, blocked the sale of a Hughes communications satellite system to an Asian consortium whose partners include companies under the Chinese military.

China is also locked in thorny talks with Washington on its entry into the World Trade Organisation.

Washington has been pressing Beijing to open its markets wider to U.S. products and reduce its \$60 billion trade surplus with the United States.

A visit last week by U.S. Deputy Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers marked the start of a series of U.S. efforts to revive stalled negotiations on China's accession to the WTO.

Representative Charlene Barshefsky will visit China immediately after Albright and she will be followed by U.S. Commerce Secretary William Daley in late March.

U.S. officials hope to forge an agreement in time for Zhu's visit.

Aside from trade, ties have also been rattled by Taiwan, with China warning the United States against providing the island with advanced missile defence systems.

China made a "veiled threat" to share missile technology with third countries if Washington builds a missile defence shield for its Asian allies, including Taiwan, the Financial Times reported Friday.

Taiwan has accused Beijing of dramatically increasing its deployment of missiles aimed at the island.

China, which views Taiwan as a renegade province, has never renounced the option of using force against the island if it formally declares independence.

Beijing has also opposed any move by the island to seek international recognition and has vetoed a continued U.N. peacekeeping force in Macedonia to protest Skopje's establishment of diplomatic relations with Taiwan.

In a reflection of the strained relations between the two countries, a New York Times report said top candidates for the U.S. ambassadorship in China have turned down the offer for the job.

Hong Kong court bows to government, 'clarifies' controversial ruling

HONG KONG (AP) — The top court in Hong Kong said Friday it has no intent to challenge the power of mainland Chinese legislators, raising concerns it had bowed to political pressure in the territory's worst row with Beijing since the handover from British rule.

Critics immediately said justices had caved in to Hong Kong's government — which reports to mainland China — after the court agreed to issue an unusual "clarification" to a landmark immigration ruling interpreted by some as a threat to Chinese sovereignty over Hong Kong.

"The court has bowed to political pressure," said Yash Ghai, a law professor and constitutional expert at Hong Kong University. "It's still independent, but this is not a good precedent." Hong Kong's independent, British-style judiciary is viewed as vital for maintaining the territory's freedoms and its credibility as an international finance center.

"The court doesn't have to clarify when Hong Kong people do not understand a ruling. But it has to explain itself when Beijing has a question. This is most absurd," said Martin Lee, a lawyer and leader of the opposition Democratic Party.

Hong Kong officials close to Beijing said they welcomed the clarification, although they said the court still failed to answer one key question: Does Hong Kong or mainland China have the final say over the laws here? In the original ruling, the Court of Final Appeal said it has the power to overrule mainland Chinese legislation that breaches Hong Kong's constitution, the basic law, adopted after Hong Kong reverted to Chinese rule in 1997.

China's leaders have called the ruling a mistake and said it should be rectified, according to Hong Kong officials who held emergency talks in Beijing on the issue.



Hong Kong Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa, left, with Justice Secretary Elsie Leung, meet reporters on Friday to discuss the Hong Kong Court of Final Appeal's clarification of a controversial immigration ruling (AP photo)

Friday, Chief Justice Andrew Li said justices never meant to question the authority of China's most powerful legislative group, the standing committee of the National People's Congress, as long as the Chinese lawmakers act in accordance with the basic law.

But Li stopped short of saying what Hong Kong justices would do with any mainland laws that breach Hong Kong's constitution.

Ma Lik, a local politician representing Hong Kong in China's National People's Congress, said justices will need to further clarify the original judgement.

"I'd like it to come out and say whether the original decision was problematic. But the court's willingness to clarify should be enough to diffuse the dispute with Beijing, he said."

Hong Kong's government rattled the legal community earlier in the week by saying it would ask the court for a clarification of its controversial ruling, handed down last month.

The Hong Kong Bar Association questioned whether the territory's top court even had the jurisdiction to clarify its own ruling.

Government counsel Geoffrey Ma insisted in a hearing early Friday that the Hong Kong government was not asking the justices to reverse the court's ruling — and he disputed contentions that the independent judiciary

was under attack. Ma had told the justices clarification was needed to dispel some people's concerns that the court "has put itself above the power of the sovereign."

Hong Kong's leader, Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa, met with reporters in the early evening and declared: "The system of rule of law is complete and intact." Tung refused to take questions.

Critics have said that if China, or the leadership it has chosen for Hong Kong, try to strong-arm Hong Kong's courts, that would pose a huge threat to the territory that is now governed with a great deal of local autonomy in an arrangement known as "one country, two systems."

Arizona executes German killer after 2 hour delay

PHOENIX (R) — A German-born convicted killer was executed by lethal injection Wednesday following a two-hour delay after he changed his mind at the last minute about his decision to die in Arizona's gas chamber, state prison officials said.

Officials said Karl Lagrand, whose case sparked high-level protests from the German government, received a lethal injection at 7:56 p.m. Mst (9:56 p.m. Est) (0256 GMT Thursday) inside the death house at the state prison complex at Florence, Arizona, about 96 km south-east of Phoenix. The 36-year-old was pronounced dead four minutes later.

Witnesses said Lagrand expressed remorse to the family of a bank manager he and his brother Walter murdered in southern Arizona in 1982. Walter Lagrand, 37, is scheduled to die in the state's gas chamber on March 3.

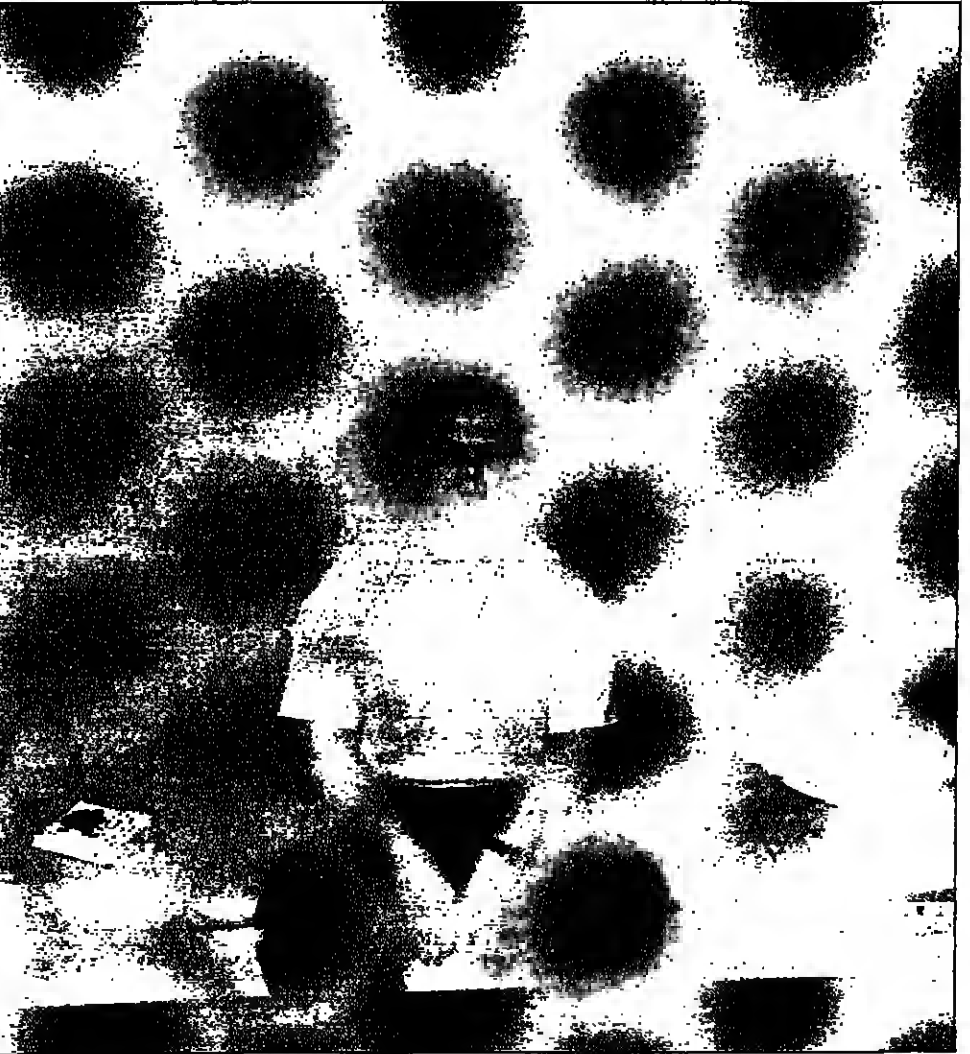
"I am sorry this took so long and dragged out, but from the bottom of my heart I am sorry for what I did," Karl Lagrand told witnesses. "I hope that one day you can find it in your heart to forgive me. I do mean that from the bottom of my heart."

Lagrand also said he regretted putting his family through the ordeal.

Had Lagrand been executed by cyanide gas inhalation as he had originally opted, he would have been the first individual to have died in Arizona's gas chamber since late 1992, when voters approved the exclusive use of lethal injection.

Inmates sentenced to die before 1992 can choose to be put to death by cyanide gas or lethal injection. None has chosen gas.

Lagrand was allowed at the last minute to choose again between gas and lethal injection by Arizona's governor and the state attorney general, officials said. The switch



Walter LaGrand of Germany waits in his cell in the Special Management Unit II of the Arizona State Prison in Florence, Ariz., on Thursday, Feb. 11, 1999. The cell wall is heavy steel with quarter-inch holes. LaGrand is waiting for his March 3 execution date after being convicted of murder. He will be taken to another cell 14 days before his scheduled execution on March 3 so he can be monitored by prison officials in case he tries to harm himself. LaGrand's brother, Karl LaGrand, was executed on Wednesday, for the same crime (AP photo)

caused the execution to be delayed by nearly two hours.

The Lagrands had previously chosen to be executed by cyanide gas in apparent hopes of having their death sentences overturned or delayed by the courts.

The strategy seemed to work early Wednesday when the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco issued a stay for Karl Lagrand on the grounds that the lethal gas represented cruel and unusual punishment.

However, the U.S. Supreme Court later lifted the stay.

Lagrand spent his last hours meeting with his attorney and prison clergy, State Department of Corrections spokeswoman Camilla Strongin said.

His last meal consisted of two bacon, lettuce and tomato sandwiches, four fried eggs, hash-brown potatoes, two breakfast rolls with strawberry jam, a half pint of sherbet and a slice of German chocolate cake. He washed

the food down with coffee and milk.

The death sentence was carried out despite intense efforts by the German government to pressure Arizona into sparing the lives of the two brothers.

In recent weeks, they unsuccessfully lashed out against the death penalty and charged that authorities violated international law by not letting them contact the German consul.

The latest pleas for a reprieve came at a state board

of executive clemency hearing Tuesday attended by a delegation of top German officials, including that country's ambassador to the United States, Jurgen Chrobog, and Claudia Roth, a member of the Bundestag, the federal assembly of Germany.

The officials had urged the four-member panel to call off the execution, branding it an inhumane punishment for those born in a country that has no death penalty.

German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer issued a statement early Thursday calling the execution "extremely regrettable" and urging the United States to pardon Walter Lagrand, scheduled to be executed on March 3.

"Even the greatest sin is no excuse to take a person's life," Fischer said in a statement released by the German embassy in Washington. He noted that a wide array of German officials and ordinary citizens had sought to prevent the execution of the German-born brothers.

"The execution of Karl Lagrand binds Germany to continue its worldwide struggle, along with its European partners, against the death penalty," Fischer said.

Prosecutors said both the Lagrands deserved to die for fatally stabbing Kea Hartsock, a 63-year-old branch manager, during a bungled bank heist that turned into murder.

On Jan. 7, 1982, the Lagrands walked into a bank in a small community north of Tucson looking for money. Armed with a toy pistol, police said Karl Lagrand tried to force Hartsock to open the vault. He could not because he only had half the combination.

The two men bound and beat Hartsock, then stabbed him 24 times with a letter opener, prosecutors said. A bank clerk also was bound and stabbed six times. She survived.

Foreign policy objectives outlined by Clinton for final years in office

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — President Bill Clinton, outlining foreign policy goals for the final two years of his administration, is urging continued American engagement in the quest for peace and freedom abroad.

Business and policy leaders in California were to hear from the president Friday about foreign affairs, "the successes that we've had over the last six years and the challenges that remain," White House Press Secretary Joe Lockhart said.

Clinton gave a glimpse of the message he wants to deliver about confronting ethnic conflicts abroad and strengthening security alliances when he appeared Wednesday at a White House news conference with Ghana's President Jerry Rawlings.

Clinton oiled the disastrous consequences when the United States withdrew from world affairs after World War I. A nation must reinforce its values with dialogue and

action around the globe, he argued.

Aides who had seen an early draft of the foreign policy address described it as a broad review of the international scene. Among the topics said to be covered are peace in the Middle East, expanding trade, the situations in Kosovo and Northern Ireland, and the threat terrorism poses to U.S. security.

"The purpose of the speech is for the president to lay out his vision for continuing American leadership and supporting peace, prosperity and freedom into the next century," said one White House official who had reviewed a draft.

With the impeachment trial over, Clinton has found himself more easily able to involve himself in foreign policy.

The president has faced criticism over the continued standoff with Iraq and the peace talks on Kosovo. The speech, however, was being portrayed as a call to press

ahead with existing policy, not as a sign of a new direction.

While Clinton was expected to tout his foreign policy accomplishments, he was admitting to some frustrations.

"I've made no progress, although I've tried, in trying to get Greece and Turkey to get along," he said late Thursday night. "I've made no progress in trying to resolve the tensions between India and Pakistan."

Clinton also planned to mention this year's entry into NATO of the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary. Another topic was the importance of fully integrating nations such as Russia and China into the world economic scheme if the U.S. and Europe are to have stable relations with them.

Before the address, Clinton was meeting with William Perry, the former defence secretary, to hear his views on U.S. policy towards North Korea, where Perry recently visited.

Authorities accused of ignoring Tyrol avalanche warnings

INNSBRUCK, Austria (AFP) — Austrian authorities were accused Friday of having ignored warnings of an imminent avalanche disaster, days before two snowslides which killed nearly 40 in a Tyrolean valley.

The charges were made by a Tyrolean TV weatherman, who said he told authorities last week that three metres of snow was expected and that people in "at risk" areas should be immediately evacuated.

They came as rescue helicopters continued Friday to evacuate thousands of shocked tourists from the entire Paznaun valley, still blocked off from the outside world after the double avalanche tragedy Tuesday and Wednesday.

Weathermen Erhard Berger raised the issue last Friday, but was ignored by authorities ahead of the first snowslide Tuesday in the village of Galtuer, the daily Kurier said.

"I warned about the catastrophic situation," he was cited by the newspaper as saying. "Friday evening I was at a crisis meeting of the provincial governor and also made the warning there," he added.

Tyrol Governor Wendelin Weingartner denied

that authorities could have done anything more to prevent the tragedies, which by Friday afternoon had claimed 37 lives, while one person remained missing.

"Everyone can be clever in retrospect. But nobody expected this kind of once-a-century event," he said, according to the APA news agency.

Erwin Koler, the government representative in Landeck at the end of the avalanche-stricken valley, also denied that any of the buildings hit in the Galtuer snowslide were in so-called "at risk" zones.

The village had not suffered an avalanche in living memory, and did not even have avalanche barriers, he pointed out. Most of the houses hit in Galtuer were therefore in low-risk "green zones," said Koler.

Meanwhile, a tourism official in Ischgl, just along the Paznaun valley from the double tragedy, said the evacuation of the neighbouring hamlet of Valzur, hit by a further avalanche Wednesday, was delayed.

"It was clear Wednesday morning that the safety of the people in Valzur could not be guaranteed," the official, Alfons Parth, told the daily.

جورن شاہز پرمیہ ہرمیہ مہاسیہ مستقلہ نھنر دالانجلیزنیہ ہن المورئسہ الصغیہ الارمنیہ

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AJ Dustour's Mazen Saket said reducing the Jordanian-Iraqi protocol by \$80 million, an amount of great importance to local exports in need of a lot of efforts to compensate it for many losses, will increase the challenges now confronting Iraq. Dealing with the current \$200 million trade protocol requires serious and clear bilateral cooperation to overcome previous years' effects, added Saket. In recent years, the protocol focused on medicine and food, in accordance with the U.N. deal, and bureaucratic regulations caused inefficient exploitation of the protocol's money, according to the writer. Although these amounts were used for some facilities and to pay debts, reducing the protocol requires reconsidering the distribution of money to cover a wide-range of goods and facilitate regulations, said Saket. Clarifying the protocol's general objectives for Jordanian producers is an essential in implementing the protocol. Reassuring local producers by creating stable policies is a basic requirement to improve the protocol's efficiency, said Saket.

With the overwhelming support Jordanians have expressed for King Abdullah and assurances of stability of the Jordanian economy, perhaps it is the right time for him to launch that much-needed cleansing process in the Jordanian administration. It is never too late.

Al Ra'i's Tareq Massarwah commented on European efforts to end the ethnic war in the former Yugoslavia. He said whether or not Europe heat Ugoslavia or extended the grace period does not make any difference either to the security of Euorpe or to the lives of the Albanians or even the autonomy of Kosovo. Destruction will not lead to the achievement of legitimate rights and it will not grant peace. Even if the two fighting parties succumb to the world's demands this will not equal a commitment to international legitimacy or human rights, said the writer. The writer questioned the reason behind Germany's wish to divide their country and letting Slovenia or Croatia away. He also questioned the United States' rush to divide Yugoslavia into five countries. He also wondered why the carnage of Bosia and Herzegovinia lasted for almost three years until the rest of the world decided to do something about it.

Al Dustour's Oreib
Rintawi said the only way
for Israel to avoid losing
more soldiers in South

Dispelling stereotypes

By Teresa Watanabe

IT SEEMS a paradox: Muslim women are denied jobs and schooling in Afghanistan, cannot drive in Saudi Arabia and are murdered by relatives for suspected sexual indiscretions in "honour killings" in places ranging from Jordan to Pakistan. But this group of Muslim women at a recent Koranic recitation class in Pasadena unanimously declares that Islam upholds perfect gender equality.

Why? Because the word of God as revealed in verse after verse of the Koran and in the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad consistently lays out egalitarian teachings, these women say. They are a diverse group of Americans with heritages ranging from African and Palestinian to Egyptian, Sri Lankan and Irish, some sporting sweaters and slacks and others brilliantly coloured robes and head coverings.

The Koran gives women a list of specifically enumerated rights, from inheritance to divorce, that were startling advances at the time they were conveyed 1,400 years ago. But, the women say, fallible practices of men have consistently skewed the word and ignored women's God-given rights in order to prop up patriarchal cultures and repressive political regimes.

"Sometimes the relation between culture and religion gets so melded, it's hard to tease it out and see which is which," said Laila Al Marayati, a Glendale gynecologist whose Muslim Women's League sponsored the class on the beautiful but breathtakingly difficult art of Koranic recitation — an art traditionally less accessible to women than men.

The recent funeral of King Hussein of Jordan highlighted the confusion over women's status in Islam, which many Muslims say is

one of the most misunderstood aspects of their religion. In one of the more noted aspects of the funeral, Queen Noor and other women were not permitted to attend, in accord with what many news reports called "Islamic tradition."

That prompted the Muslim Public Affairs Council to issue a statement that the exclusion was "a cultural tradition garbed in Islamic clothing that varies from one place to another." It noted that the fundamentalist regime of Iran did not bar women from funerals and that several women witnessed the burial of the Prophet, including his family members.

In other reflections of the vast diversity of Muslim practices regarding women, Egypt has no female judges but such places as Syria, Morocco, Tunisia do; women are not allowed to lead mixed gatherings in prayer in most Muslim countries but can in Indonesia, said Yvonne Haddad, a Georgetown University professor of Islamic studies.

Albania and Bosnia don't give women any inheritance despite explicit Koranic instructions to do so, while most Muslim families ignore exhortations for chastity from both genders and expect it only from females, others say.

Many of the most repressive practices ascribed to Islam are based on cultural traditions, social considerations or contested interpretations, many Muslims say. Even Saudi-trained scholars, for instance, agree that the Kingdom's ban on women driving is not grounded in the Koran or the Prophet's traditions. Instead it is a modern social measure aimed at preventing women and men from mingling in unsafe or unexpected circumstances — such as a woman's car breaking down. (Recent news reports suggest the Saudis may revoke their rule because the cost of providing 500,000 imported male

cabdrivers for women is taxing the shrinking treasury). "Nothing in Islam prevents women from driving — the wife of the Prophet rode a camel — but tradition overcame certain teachings of Islam," said Husam Ayloush of the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

The treatment of women under the Taliban of Afghanistan is widely condemned by Islamic scholars as an affront to Islam. The fundamentalist regime has barred women from working and attending school, forced them to cover themselves from head to toe and imposed a blizzard of repressive rules, including no singing, loud laughs or wearing shoes that click lest the sounds lure men into "corruption."

Reports of beatings, rape and torture are rife — and transmitted to the world via the Web site of the Revolutionary Assn. of the Women of Afghanistan.

Islamic scholars around the world have plied the Taliban with opinions that such measures drastically violate Koranic teachings of respect and equality for women: Afghan native Wais Al Qarni was so incensed, he says, that he fired off a letter to the Afghan Embassy in Washington but never received a response.

"They are beating women, preventing them from learning, but Allah says men and women are one," said Al Qarni, 23, an Oakland College student studying criminology.

The misuse of Islam to justify sexism has prompted the Muslim Women's League and other organisations to urge women to directly study the Koran and the Prophet's traditions to gain their own understanding of the egalitarian vision laid out in them.

"Our main message to women is that our religion is from God and not human beings, and don't accept any intermediaries between you and God," said Sharifa Alkhatib of the Washington-based North American Council for Muslim Women.

The organisation works to educate Muslim women and combat dismal public stereotypes that they are "controlled by men, don't think clearly, are probably battered and, if they cover their heads, can't speak English," Alkhatib said.

Similarly, the Muslim Women's League sends out speakers, sponsors sports camps for girls, organises Koranic study groups and issues position papers highlighting Islam's egalitarian teachings ranging from women's legal rights to their spiritual roles.

Unlike the Bible, Al Marayati said, the Koran does not hold that Eve was made from Adam's rib or tempted him into sin; both were created equally, both erred, both were banished and both were forgiven.

The Islamic texts also sing the praises of strong and noble women, from the Prophet's wife to the Queen of Sheba to Mary, the mother of Jesus, and notes that women battled in the Prophet's armies, held positions of religious leadership and worked in business and commerce.

The Koran condemns female infanticide, a common practice in pre-Islamic Arabia, and details a long list of women's rights: to own property, engage in business, choose a marriage partner, divorce, claim inheritance, receive education and be treated with respect and dignity, Alkhatib said.

Alkhatib and others say that many practices seen as repressive by non-Muslims are in fact liberating — such as wearing head coverings and other modest clothing.

"The main reason we wear a head covering is to set ourselves apart from males and insist they observe us as human beings, with ideas and concepts, rather than be distracted by hair and perfume and make-up," Alkhatib said. Still, she said, numerous Muslim

American women have been denied jobs by airlines, restaurants, even universities because of their attire.

"There is such a horrible negative image associated with the scarf: of ignorance, dirty hair or terrorism," Alkhatib said.

Talibah Jilani of the Kamlat women's organisation based in Mountain View said other seemingly sexist practices should be viewed in context: Dictates for male relatives to travel with women, for instance, were made during the time of widespread war and banditry and not only protected them but also freed them from the burden of carrying luggage and the like. Even polygamy, she said, was originally sanctioned as a compassionate way to support war widows who might otherwise be forced into prostitution or poverty. Still, Muslim women acknowledge that a great gap too often exists between Islam's ideal regarding women and their actual treatment. For instance, all three women's organisations are tackling domestic violence, as significant a problem in their community as nationwide.

In one limited study, Alkhatib's group found about 10 per cent of Muslim leaders reported instances of domestic violence; a more extensive national survey is currently under way. The Muslim Women's League is planning a conference on the issue this year.

"I think more women are saying we need to wake up, learn to educate ourselves, be more active in the community and have our voices heard," said Fatima Cash, a Muslim Women's League member who converted to Islam from Catholicism 22 years ago.

Squatters left out in the cold in Egypt

By Cynthia Johnston Reuters

JUST WEEKS after the birth of his first son, 27-year-old Mohammad Khalil found himself locked in jail while government bulldozers razed his childhood home.

"We have no protection," said his wife, Fadila Al Sayyed, 23, holding their child.

Like nearly 12 million other Egyptians, according to government figures, Khalil's father built the family home about 20 years ago — illegally — on a vacant plot of land.

Families like his face uncertainty as Egypt embarks on a project to improve most of the country's 400-600 shantytowns.

Some will be destroyed altogether.

In November, Khalil's house was among 67 flattened by bulldozers. Residents say they were razed to widen a road. Fearing trouble, Khalil was

detained by the authorities as the heavy machinery flattened his family home.

Homeless and cold, Khalil, his wife and baby now take shelter in a makeshift shack with a dirt floor just metres away from where their old home once stood. Some scrap wood, a plastic mat and weathered shutters salvaged from his demolished home protect them from the wind.

Lawyers volunteering for the squatters, who are suing for compensation, say as many as 2,000 nearby homes may also be demolished.

Young head to city in search of work. The government estimates that a fifth of Cairo's population live in 70 shantytowns. Most of the squatters are the families of factory workers who moved from the countryside to look for work.

As farmland along the banks of the Nile and the delta grew scarcer with each successive generation of farmers inheriting less land, young people

set off for the cities in search of jobs.

They work — often as maids or in factories — for low wages. A working couple may make only 200-400 pounds (\$58-\$117) a month.

"They will look for any cheap housing. When they don't find it in the city proper, they will go to a nearby empty lot and put up a shack," said Sadedine Ibrahim, President of the Ben Khaldun Centre development.

Over time, the buildings became more permanent. Khalil's father planted grapes and fig trees.

"The unmarried got married and had kids. Their small children grew into big children. They went to elementary school, secondary school, university," said Ahmed Al Banna, 55, an iron and steel worker who is the Helwan group's self-appointed spokesman.

Families began to earn more money, although few earned

enough to pay for a down payment on a new flat. Instead of moving, they simply kept improving their homes.

"Most of these settlements are structurally sound," said Hussein Al Gibaaly, head of the housing ministry's general organisation for physical planning.

"They are built with bricks and reinforced concrete. These are not like shacks or mud. Compared with squatter settlements in other parts of the world, they are good," he said.

Government concentrates on war effort for years, the government ignored the shantytowns and they continued to grow as greater Cairo's population swelled to an estimated 16 million.

The government, Gibaaly said, had other priorities.

"We were engaged in war with Israel and much of the budget was for military resources," he said referring to four wars with Israel

between 1948 and 1973.

It was not until after the last war in 1973 that Egypt could face its housing problem. Gibaaly said. Yet, well into the 1980s, rural migrants continued to flood into Cairo at a rate of about 150,000 a year.

Islamist squatter 'republic' prompts action the catalyst for change came in 1992 when the government discovered a group of Islamists had taken over the Isquatter slum of Imababa near central Cairo and formed a "republic," Ibrahim said.

More than 12,000 troops retook the slum by force.

"It was like a showdown," Ibrahim said.

At about that time, the government started making plans to develop the shantytowns, extending water mains and sewers, paving roads, and building schools. Since then, it has spent more than 700 million pounds on infrastructure.

The government has built 18

new cities around Egypt to absorb the masses. Five years ago, 30 per cent of the 180,000 flats in those cities lay vacant. Now, Gibaaly said, the government has trouble keeping up with demand.

Some 44 additional cities are being planned to accommodate 20 million more people by the year 2017, he said.

Ibrahim says about 65 per cent of Egypt's shantytowns are slated for improvement. The rest — the eyesores, those on land the government wants to use, those encroaching on Egypt's ancient monuments and those deemed too derelict to fix — are to be moved or completely razed. He says the project is about halfway complete.

Families whose homes are demolished are entitled to a new flat or compensation of 5,000 pounds per room.

Al Banna says, however, he and his neighbours have yet to see any money. He estimates that some members of at least

54 families — mostly young men — remain homeless.

"We live in chicken coops," Al Banna said.

Ibrahim said that if people are left homeless, that could counteract government efforts to root out extremism.

"The future is bleak for many of them. They become easy prey for vict and extremism," he said. "When youngsters see their houses demolished, they get very angry. It is easy for them to be recruited by criminals or extremists." Khalil said he no longer works because he is afraid to leave his wife and baby on the street.

"We want houses. We want flats. It's a hard situation. Maybe they will give us flats, maybe. But when will the help come?" Al Banna said.

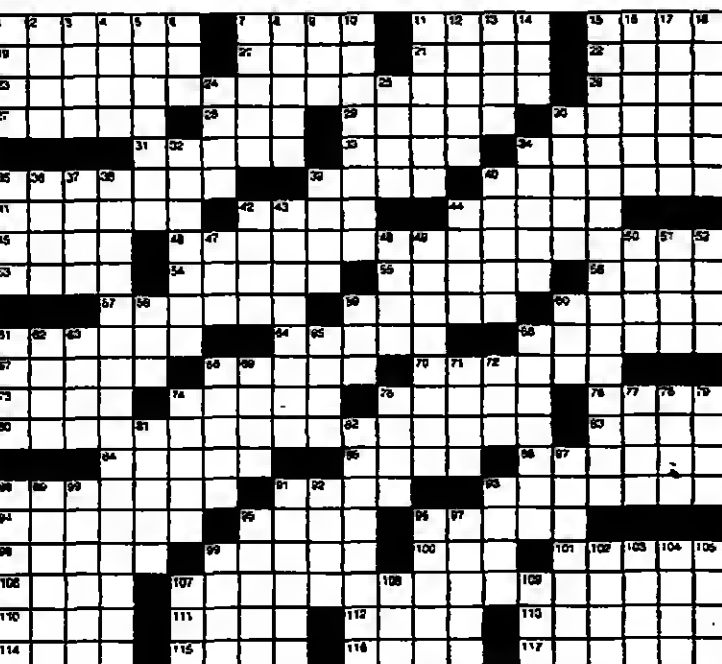
The Saturday Crossword

TWO-TIMERS

By Robert H. Wolfe, North Woodmere, New York

- ACROSS
1. Cornelian
 2. "The Pianist" composer
 3. "Fly"
 4. Insect snare
 5. Blighted trees
 6. Tiana's man
 7. General Bradley
 8. Whittier
 9. Japanese goli
 10. Aoki
 11. Gnostic character
 12. Two types of
 13. Jackals?
 14. Mealy
 15. Carried
 16. Buy the farm
 17. Mormon leader
 18. Natural hair coloring
 19. "Night Moves" singer
 20. Ice on the move
 21. More time-consuming
 22. Shund
 23. Lady's address
 24. Barry of the Detroit Lions
 25. Nine-days' devotion
 26. And others, in brief
 27. Move about
 28. Rocky outcrop
 29. Twisted?
 30. Early life burner
 31. Stringed instrument
 32. Speaks
 33. Slurmy
 34. Learned papers
 35. Common maladies
 36. Low blaser
 37. Women
 38. Oral statement
 39. Loathing
 40. Game akin to bingo
 41. Give one's consent
 42. Take lunch
 43. Southern constellation
 44. Cacophonously
 45. Astronaut's negative
 46. Two measures?
 47. Sunbather's partner
 48. Savior
 49. People conquered by the Incas
 50. Work station
 51. Outpouring of gossip
 52. Sullen depression
 53. Grace ending
 54. Transitive
 55. Relaxing

- DOWN
1. Senator from Virginia
 2. River of Spain
 3. Equid
 4. Persian Gulf country
 5. Pines
 6. Way in, abbr.
 7. Foster of "The Silence of the Lambs"
 8. Burning coal
 9. Much removed
 10. Skydiver's thrill
 11. Common sense
 12. Cosmopolitan
 13. Laidler
 14. Heavyweight champ of 1934
 15. Greenward
 16. Two meanings?
 17. Waiting room
 18. Behavior
 19. Does barbering
 20. Advantage
 21. Prey
 22. Sharpener
 23. Makes possible
 24. Haunts
 25. Allow ending?
 26. Clusely
 27. Infamous tar
 28. Two grammatical
 29. West and Murray
 30. Reads quickly
 31. Russian-born
 32. Allusion
 33. Infringement
 34. In the same place
 35. Leon
 36. Group of GIs
 37. Switch tail?
 38. Dots
 39. Famer of Regan



79. Lubricates
80. Accomplishments
 81. Sea
 82. Gallery display
 83. Sampled
 84. 50th-century leader
 85. More organized
 86. French airplanes
 87. Recruits dinner
 88. Treble of
 89. Send packing
 90. Sacred: pret.
 91. Watery expanse
 92. Cager Nick Van
 93. Large land mass
 94. For life
 95. Elder of older
 96. D.C. VPs
 97. Somp
 98. Firk
 99. de deux

Iraq seeks cure for medical black market

By Dominic Evans Reuters

IRAQ WILL introduce medical rationing next year to curb a black market in medicines which has drained the sanctions-hit government's already limited resources, a senior official said.

Deputy Health Minister Khalid Jamil Al Khayyat said the planned system would limit the number of times people claim medicines for nominal prices at clinics around the country.

"We are trying to ensure that the medicine gets to the patient," Khayyat told Reuters in an interview. "If you go round the streets in Iraq now you will find people selling medicine." He said currently there were few measures to prevent people claiming medicines at virtually no cost and selling them on to needy patients for a profit when government supplies dried up.

"There is a big demand at the clinic. Because of the situation people started using this as a tool for making business... A lot of medicine may go to the wrong hands, but it is not easy to control," he said.

Iraq currently buys over \$200 million worth of medicines and medical equipment every six months under the oil-for-food accord with the United Nations, aimed at alleviating the worst effects of sanctions.

But the programme is plagued with delays, both inside and outside Iraq. United Nations observers say many clinics run out of medicines before

mid-morning.

Doctors say they are still desperately short of supplies after eight years of war and sanctions, which increased malnutrition and devastated water and sanitation systems, raising people's susceptibility to disease.

Khayyat said from next year everybody would be issued with six cards annually, each granting a visit to a clinic to buy medicine at a nominal cost.

He said the system imposed limits but was flexible enough to meet genuine needs of those who required extra medicine.

Chronic patients would be exempted and cards could be exchanged between family members. After they were used up people would have to pay for medicine — but still with substantial government assistance.

"It will still be subsidised about 90 per cent, as opposed to about 99 per cent for the first six visits," Khayyat said.

He said the shortage of medicines was heightened by delays in supplies of medical equipment which Iraq blames on U.S. and British envoys in the United Nations Sanctions Committee.

Problems with medical distribution inside Iraq, which he linked to lack of spare parts also held up in the U.N. committee, made things worse.

A U.N. report said of the \$421 million worth of medicine which had arrived in Iraq by November under the oil-for-food deal, only \$185 million had been distributed to "end-

users".

U.N. observers say a storage centre the size of three football pitches is filled with medicines in the Iraqi capital.

Khayyat said the government currently had perhaps three months' supplies of some medicines in central stores, but lack of regional stores and transport made distribution difficult.

"We have a shortage of trucks and a shortage of tyres. The problem with distribution is also the number of items... We're talking about 2,000 or 3,000 medicines and related materials," he said. "So we're really talking about a big problem." Degradation of health facilities, from X-ray equipment to sewage pumps, had continued and patchy repairs rarely lasted more than a few months.

Over the long term Iraq would have to tackle the "wrong medical practices" which he said had affected the work of health administrators and doctors because of lack of supplies.

"Doctors started trying to do things without relying on basic medical procedures so now when we get the material, they are used to doing things without the established procedure," Iraq could need \$2 billion just to rehabilitate medical equipment, or five times the total value of money allocated annually to the entire health sector, including medicines, under the oil-for-food deal, Khayyat said.

"This is a very rough estimate. maybe we need more."

EU urges tariff-free export treatment for world's poorest countries

4.8 million tonnes of Iraqi crude in 1999 as in past years, around half of which is delivered free while the rest sells for more than the current market price.

The bilateral trade deal has been exempt from U.N. sanctions imposed on Iraq following its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Jordan relies entirely on Iraq, its main trade partner, to meet its oil requirements.

“Negotiating does not mean violating,” he said.

He was also keen to reassure investors about their tax liabilities, saying: “Company tax is 10 per cent maximum, and we have no intention of changing that.”

Hoss also repeated his intention of simplifying the formalities and procedures for foreign investors as demanded by the World Bank and the European Union.

made at the end of the so-called Uruguay Round of world trade negotiations, the EU says it will press for the inclusion of new areas in the Seattle round.

These range from liberalisation of investment to rules on competition and trade facilitation, the official said.

Greater transparency and predictability of investment rules would attract badly needed capital to faltering emerging economies and

A set of clear competition rules would benefit consumers, small and medium-sized companies and stimulate competition, the official said.

countries to cut bureaucratic procedures. "Some countries don't even try to import because of red tape," the official said.

A new "Millennium" round would have to address a broad spectrum of interests. The sectoral approach has been

WTO members have been asked to table concrete proposals for subjects they want on the trade round.

agenda by July.

He said the Asian financial crisis and a global economic downturn had contributed to the slower growth, which was the lowest since the economy grew 3.55 per cent in 1983.

He said the Asian financial crisis and a global economic downturn had contributed to the slower growth, which was the lowest since the economy grew 3.55 per cent in 1983.

Economic growth in the last three months of 1998 was 3.71 per cent, the lowest during the year.

The DGBAS forecast

this year's GDP growth even lower at 4.74 per cent amid a slow world economic recovery.

The average per capita income in 1998 was \$12,040, slightly down from 1997's record high of

The island's annual consumer price index (CPI)

rose 1.68 per cent year-to-year.

MAJOR CURRENCIES AGAINST JORDAN DINAR					
NOTE: NEITHER ACCESS NOR THE PUBLISHER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY ERRORS OR MISTAKES					
DEPOSIT INTEREST PRICES					
CURRENCY	1 M	3 M	6 M	1 YEAR	
U.S. DOLLAR	4.3800	4.9200	4.6800	4.6700	
EUROPEAN STERLING	6.3400	5.1900	5.0600	5.0300	
GERMANY MARK	3.0000	2.9500	2.9800	2.9000	
GERMANY MARK	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	
SWITZERLAND FRANC	1.1800	1.1700	1.1600	1.0700	
JAPAN YEN	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	

CENTRAL BANK BULLETIN			
CURRENCY	ASK	BID	
U.S. DOLLAR	0.7080	0.7140	
EUROPEAN STERLING	1.1330	1.1387	
GERMANY MARK	0.3993	0.4013	
SWITZERLAND FRANC	0.4805	0.4830	
FRANCE FRANC	0.1191	0.1198	
JAPAN YEN	0.5876	0.5908	
HOLLAND GUILDER	0.3544	0.3561	
SINGAPORE DOLLAR	0.0003	0.0005	
EURO	0.7909	0.7948	

WORLD STOCK MARKETS				
STOCK MARKET	INDEX	CLOSING	LAST CLOSE	CHANGE
FRANKFURT	DAI	6092.31	6097.58	76.78
HONG KONG	HANG SENG	6077.57	6053.88	243.58
LONDON	FT-SE 100	4397.69	4155.20	125.40
NEW YORK	DJ INDUSTRIAL	6308.67	6544.42	-244.75
NEW YORK	NYSE COMPOSITE	581.56	568.00	-4.47
NEW YORK	NYSE COMPOSITE	855.79	700.82	-3.13
NEW YORK	S-P 500	1253.91	1271.15	-17.74
TOKYO	NIKKEI-225	14470.45	14305.49	1155.00
PARIS	CAC 40	4218.70	4207.86	9.75


PRECIOUS METALS			
	NETAL	ASK	BID
GOLD	287.00	287.50	
SILVER	9.30	9.50	
PLATINUM	381.20	383.50	

have the money right away, he could raise taxes," she added, according to Summers.

Summers said he had started to explain that economic problems were not that easy to solve, when the other daughter jumped in to scold her twin: "He's given money before, and they wasted it!"

THE BETTER HALF.

By Glasbergen



"I want pepperoni and sausage on my half. My wife wants ginseng, ginkgo and St. John's Wort on her half."

JUMBLE

That Scrambled Word Game

by Herb Arnold and Mike Argrison

Unscramble these four jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

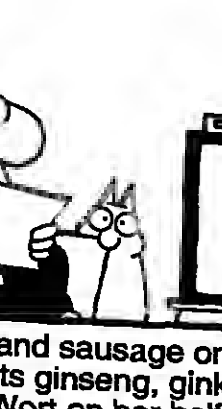
ANBLK

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ERRAM

BLOORE

DAUMAR



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Print answer here:

Yesterday's

Jumble: CHICK

Answer: What a beer brewer needs —

(Answers tomorrow)

MADMAN

OUTFIT

[illegible]

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Jordan-U.S. Business Partnership invites firms to benefit from its services

**** THE BUSINESS** community in Jordan gained an important new addition to its arena in January 1999. It is the Jordan-U.S. Business Partnership (JUSBP) whose programme is operated by the International Executive Service Corps (IESC), based in Stamford, Connecticut, USA. IESC is a non-profit organisation that provides technical assistance and training to private sector firms and trade organisations in the developing world.

The JUSBP is a joint initiative of United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) mission that has been operating in Jordan since 1949, and the Ministry of Industry and Trade (MIT) of Jordan. The Industrial Development Directorate (IDD) of the (MIT) is acting as the counterpart of the JUSBP.

The programme, which covers a four-year time span, has a budget of \$15 million. JUSBP has multiple objectives pertaining to the continued development of Jordan's private sector through providing technical assistance, consulting services and training to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); to local business support organisations (BSOs), i.e. "trade associations".

JUSBP's efforts will concentrate on empowering the SMEs, which constitute the vast majority of Jordan's private sector, to enhance their own productivity and competitiveness in non-traditional international markets and in the more open domestic market of the future, while meaningfully increasing employment opportunities for Jordanian workers.

BSOs are a vital link to future efforts

of their member firms by providing continuing technical assistance, that include business planning, market research, plant layout, licensing and franchising, meeting quality standards such as ISO 9000 and, raising awareness towards a "Culture of Quality," through industrial extension programmes, computer-based activities, and other services.

Eligible Jordanian firms are invited and encouraged to apply for the different services of JUSBP which include consultation, seminars and other training courses. Most activities will be conducted in English by specialists from the U.S. although Jordanian consultants will also be employed to provide assistance. Cooperating firms will be expected to share some of the expenses of direct service to their companies.

The JUSBP operation in Amman is under the direction of Lewis P. Reade, a person well-known on the Jordanian business scene for his work with USAID. Reade holds a BS in mechanical engineering from the University of Miami. He is joined in his work by Arun Walvekar, a recognised expert in quality assurance and standards. The other senior executive of JUSBP is Bassam Khatib, a veteran Jordanian businessman and government official.

Businessmen and factory managers who wish to obtain more information on the activities of JUSBP can call any of the following numbers:

Telephone 568-4308 Amman
Fax: 568-4266 Amman
E-mail: Mail@JUSBP.org

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You have a grand trine in five signs this weekend, but be careful of accidents. There's one square to Mars that could cause a breakdown, so if you are going to do something risky, make sure you've taken all the precautions. By and large, it looks as though trying something new or unusual should turn out very well. Go for it.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) How are you going to get out of a situation that makes you uncomfortable without hurting anyone's feelings? Well, it might not be possible. You might simply have to put your own needs and those of your family first. You can only take care of so many people at one time. Set your priorities.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You have so much to do, you may not know if you're coming or going. There are more invitations than you can possibly accept, so you'll have to choose. You could stop at each place for a few minutes, but most likely you'll have to disappoint somebody. Don't be dismayed. Perhaps you can schedule them for tomorrow.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 22) Looks like you're interested in shopping for an expensive item. You're willing to do more work to make the money, and that might be necessary. If you can get a second job today, you might as well take it. The extra cash could make what otherwise would take years take only months instead.

LEO: (July 23 to August 22) A couple things might get away from you today. Maybe a partner wants to do a year from what you'd planned. A household item might need fixing. A new friend might be just too bizarre. But these are all easily managed by a person as confident as you. Travel, romance and sports are all highly favoured, if that gives you any ideas.

VIRGO: (August 23 to September 22) Somebody who's very demanding seems to think you can do everything at once. Well, why should you? What are you getting out of this deal? It had better be good, or you have permission to simply duck out. On the other hand, if you're preparing your place to entertain a persnickety crowd, use this tension as motivation.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 23) There's plenty of fun to be had this weekend, especially if you're willing to do a little work. Looks like a combination of the two is your best entertainment option. Does a neighbour need a hand raised or something? If you and a friend get together, a job that's way too hard for one person could turn into a reason for a party.

SCORPIO: (October 24 to November 21) You've had a rough week, with moments of brilliance interspersed with hard work, grim determination and maybe even sheer terror. All in all, you've done quite well. Face it, you've got the energy of 10 normal human beings, and probably the creativity of 20. Today, you have permission to vegetate. Let somebody else entertain you.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) If you go one place, you won't be able to go the other, and you'd like to be in both places at once. Well, unless you can manage to clone yourself, you'll have to choose one. Opt for the one with the most love and affection and fun and games. If both have the same amount, go with the one you feel passionate about.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 19) This is a great day for an open house. If you were selling your place, you could get a really high price for it today. Maybe you'll sell something else at a good price now. With the moon in Leo, people won't want to barter much. They'll just pay whatever you ask. So ask top dollar.

AQUARIUS: (January 20 to February 18) You may feel like you're playing ping pong. You make a good shot and the other guy hits it back at you, and then it's your turn again. Other guy hits it back at you, and then it's your turn again. Just stop worrying about it. The day could end with both of you having a great time, and neither actually triumphing.

PISCES: (February 19 to March 20) This is an excellent day to clear out your closets, your attic, your basement and wherever else you've got stuff stashed away that never gets used anymore. Get it out of your way so you can have the room for some other idea to sprout. All that old stuff is cluttering up your mind. Stop worrying and just pitch it.

Birthstone of February: Amethyst — Onyx

Pakistan's airline posts \$46.93m profit

KARACHI (AFP) — Pakistan's national carrier Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) said Thursday it posted an after-tax profit of \$46.93 million in 18 months from July 1997 to December 1998.

PIA Chairman, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi told a news conference the airlines earned a profit despite a currency devaluation and credit freeze amid an economic crisis in the wake of the country's nuclear tests in May.

The figure was a remarkable achievement, he said, as PIA had sustained a loss of \$102.22 million during the period from July 1996 to June 1997.

"PIA's revenues increased from \$711.57 million to \$1.17 billion during the period under review," Abbasi said.

But airline officials refused to give a figure for the 1998 financial year on its own.

Abbasi attributed the profit to a reduction in operational costs, fuel prices, a change in fuel policy, the closure of non-profit off-line stations and an increase in domestic fares.

AFM FROM 99-02-20 TO 99-02-24

ACCESS 4646868

COMPANY	OPEN	CLOSE	CHANGE
BANKS			
ARAB BK	215.000	218.000	+1.40%
NYL BK	1.550	1.510	-2.58%
CAIRO AMMAN BK	2.650	2.520	-4.91%
BK OF JORDAN	1.350	1.340	-0.74%
MIDDLE EAST BK	0.980	0.940	-4.08%
INDUSTRIAL DEV BK	1.510	1.480	-1.32%
THE HOUSING BK	2.880	2.880	0.00%
JO. KUNAF BK	1.690	1.640	-2.96%
JO. GULF BK	0.700	0.670	-4.29%
ARAB JO. INVER. BK	2.300	2.200	-4.35%
JO. ISLAMIC BK	1.780	1.690	-5.06%
UNION BK	1.000	1.000	0.00%
JO. INVER. & FIN. BK	1.350	1.340	-0.74%
BET EL MAL	0.700	0.670	-4.29%
ARAB BING COR	2.630	2.590	-1.52%
PHILADELPHIA BK	0.550	0.520	-5.45%
BANKS INDEX	285.500	285.500	+0.72%
INSURANCE			
JO. FRENCH INS	2.880	2.880	0.00%
JO. GULF INS	1.580	1.500	-5.06%
AHLIA INS	0.990	1.000	+1.01%
INSURANCE INDEX	125.120	125.120	+0.42%
SERVICES			
ELECTRIC POWER	1.770	1.730	-2.26%
ROAD ELECTRICITY	1.730	1.730	0.00%
VEHICLES OWNERS	2.430	2.310	-4.94%
PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	0.810	0.880	+8.64%
JO. INTL. TRADING CENT	0.260	0.250	-3.85%
AL-RAT	7.250	7.100	-2.07%
ZARQA FOR EDU	0.880	0.900	+2.27%
ARAB INTL. FOR INVER. & EDU	2.000	1.980	-1.00%
UNIFIED LAND TRANS	1.180	1.170	-0.85%
SERVICES INDEX	114.790	114.790	-0.72%
INDUSTRY			
CEMENT	3.650	3.760	+3.01%
PHOSPHATE	2.370	2.370	0.00%
ARAB POTASH	4.150	4.060	-2.17%
PETROLEUM REFINERY	10.850	10.770	-0.74%
JO. TANNING	5.150	5.150	0.00%
THE IND. COM. & AGRIC	1.110	1.100	-0.90%
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL	3.170	3.100	-2.21%
CERAMIC IND	1.350	1.300	-3.70%
JO. DAIRY	2.850	2.750	-3.51%
TOBACCO & CIGARET	1.540	1.570	+1.95%
JO. PAPER	1.140	1.090	-4.39%
ARAB CHEMICAL DETERGENTS	7.020	7.000	-0.28%
DAR AL DAWA	5.700	5.800	+1.75%
MIDDLE EAST COMPLEX	0.950	0.950	0.00%
JO. STEEL	0.950	0.970	+2.11%
ARAB ALUMINIUM	1.900	1.840	-3.16%
CHLORINE	1.230	1.200	-2.44%
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	0.410	0.410	0.00%
NYL IND	0.360	0.370	+2.78%
PETRO - CHEMICAL	0.310	0.310	0.00%
CHEMICAL & VEGETABLE OIL	1.140	1.140	0.00%
ROCKWOOL	0.310	0.290	-6.45%
UNIVERSAL CHEMICAL	1.000	0.880	-12.00%
GENERAL INVER	3.260	3.150	-3.08%
NYL CABLE	0.650	0.560	-13.00%
SULPHUR - CHEMICALS	0.460	0.420	-8.70%
ARAB CENTER FOR PHARM	1.340	1.320	-1.49%
KAWTHAR	0.370	0.370	0.00%
EL-ZAY	1.310	1.280	-2.30%
UNIVERSAL MODERN IND	0.650	0.600	-7.69%
IND. RESOURCES	0.450	0.440	-2.22%
NEW CAPLES	0.620	0.590	-4.84%
NYL ALUMINIUM	0.790	0.830	+5.06%
INDUSTRY INDEX	96.310	96.310	-0.32%
PARALLEL			
EXPORT BK T2	0.920	0.930	+1.09%
JO. TRADING FACILITIES	0.380	0.420	+10.53%
CENTRAL STORG	0.350	0.390	+11.43%
UNION INVER CORP	0.900	0.890	-1.11%
AL-EKRAH	0.980	0.960	-2.04%
ADVANCED PHAR	0.930	0.930	0.00%
AL - SHARG	1.060	1.050	-0.94%
FALCON	1.150	1.090	-5.22%
MEDICAL APPLIANCES	0.450	0.450	0.00%
ARAB INVESTORS	1.010	1.060	+4.95%
ARAB INTL. TRADE	0.150	0.190	+26.67%
SPECIAL INVER	0.690	0.690	0.00%
TEXTILE & AUMAL	0.430	0.420	-2.33%
CENTURY	1.210	1.180	-2.48%
NUMCO	0.230	0.190	-17.40%
MIDDLE EAST PHAR 90	0.510	0.580	+13.73%
UNION TORACCO	4.550	4.100	-9.89%
AL-RAD	0.540	0.540	0.00%
INTL. CERAMIC	0.350	0.350	0.00%
INTL. TEXTILE MANU	0.290	0.290	0.00%
NYL POULTRY	0.570	0.560	-1.75%
NUTRI DAR	0.780	0.760	-2.56%
HOUSING BK FUND N.A.V	100.000	95.000	-5.00%
GRAND INDEX	182.1	182.1	+0.36%

International securities firm paints bright prospects for Jordanian stock market

By Amy Henderson

AMMAN — A leading international securities firm has given the Jordanian equities market a glowing forecast and has described global concern about the country's political and economic uncertainty as "excessively pessimistic."

"While we do not mean to belittle the difficulties that the tragic death of King Hussein causes to Jordan and its people, we feel that the prospects for the economy have significantly improved in the near term," said the Japanese Nomura, one of the world's top investment banking institutes. "Coupled with our market valuation and estimates, we continue to recommend investors buy Jordanian equities."

The death of the late Monarch initially sounded alarm bells abroad that Jordan, without King Hussein, could face a serious economic and political crisis in the country, now grappling with unemployment and poverty approaching 30 per cent and suffering near zero economic growth. The ascension of His Majesty King Abdullah to the Throne also was met outside Jordan with apprehension, with political pundits abroad describing him as an "unknown quantity" whose political

and economic skills were yet unproven.

Nomura's MENA (Middle East and North Africa) Research Division, in a report entitled "Jordan After King Hussein — Concern is Overplayed," said "King Abdullah has inherited a relatively peaceful equilibrium in the region and in the country — his main task will be to maintain this equilibrium rather than to reinvent the wheel."

"Concerns that the death of King Hussein will mark the beginning of a period of political uncertainty seem grossly misplaced," Nomura stressed.

Nomura cites several reasons for its optimism, among them, the government's commitment to its economic policy, including the extension recently of Jordan's agreement with the IMF.

Additionally, Nomura said that pledges of financial aid from Jordan's friends was also a reassuring signal. Nomura concluded that fears of a return to populist economic policies and the collapse of the dinar were unfounded.

"So far this year, the Jordanian market has surprised pundits and we believe that it could deliver better returns this year compared to that of 1998," Nomura said. "From a macroeconomic perspective, foreign cur-

rency inflows in the form of aid should ease fears regarding the currency while earning announcements in March could again boost the market in the second quarter."

Nomura predicted that earnings growth for 1999 at the Amman Financial Market (AFM) would be "modestly lower than 1998, but will remain in the double digit range as recovery continues in the industrial sector."

Nomura predicts 1998 earnings growth, to be announced in March, to reach 1.3 per cent, compared to 4.3 per cent in 1997, and added that a further economic downturn should not prohibit investors from investing at the AFM since earnings growth for the AFM's largest banks and industries garner most of their earnings outside Jordan.

Therefore, Nomura said, a large portion of the market is not directly impacted by the domestic economy due to the structure of the AFM.

The Nomura report also contended that the AFM discount associated with economic and political concerns "is unnecessarily high for Jordanian equities."

Stocks on the AFM have traded at an approximate 30 per cent discount to the MENA weighted average earnings rule multiple.

Trading, prices rise at AFM

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — Trading rose sharply at the Amman Financial Market (AFM) last week and the general price index recorded a 0.65 point increase as a result of the sudden demand on the Cement and Arab Bank shares, a broker said Friday.

The stock market's figures showed the last week's trading volume at JD18.8 million compared to JD12 million during the previous week. The average daily trading amounted to JD3.7 million.

Despite a drop in the prices of most of shares that were traded on the floor last week, the AFM's 60-share index closed at 182.10 points, up from 181.45 in the previous week.

Naim Naqeb, a broker at the stock market, indicated that trading in cement, Arab and National

banks' shares accounted for 65 per cent of the total trading volume.

Naqeb attributed the slight increase in the price index to the rise in the share price of the Arab Bank, the stock market's major blue-chip, which closed at JD218 up from JD215.

Shares of 85 firms were traded in the floor, where 52 companies recorded decline in prices, 12 registered increase while 14 remained unchanged.

The industrial sector ranked first with a trading volume of JD12.8 million, the bulk of which was recorded by the cement company following a deal between foreign investors.

The firm's share price closed at JD3.760, up from JD3.650 in the past week.

The phosphate company came second with a trading volume of JD1.1 million followed by the

Arab Pharmaceutical Manufacturing, whose trading volume amounted to JD642,465.

The banking sector ranked second with 22.8 per cent of the trading volume, 11 per cent of which was taken by the Arab Bank.

The Jordan National Bank won 6.5 per cent of the trading volume.

The services sector recorded 2.2 per cent of the total trading, as the Jordan Electric Power Company ranked first among the nine firms whose shares were traded on the floor in this sector.

Parallel market share amounted to 6.3 of the total trading volume. Out of the shares of 24 firms that were traded in this sector, only 14 recorded increase in their share prices and 12 registered decline.

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Knicks beat Timberwolves in overtime thriller

NEW YORK (R) — Allan Houston drilled a three-pointer with 4.6 seconds left in overtime to lift the New York Knicks to their fourth straight victory, a 115-113 thriller over the Minnesota Timberwolves on Thursday.

There were six lead changes in the final 1:41. A tip-in by Joe Smith put Minnesota up 113-112 with 27 seconds remaining. All five Knicks touched the ball on the next possession, with Larry Johnson firing a pass from inside to Houston, who hit the three-pointer with one second left on the shot clock.

"I wasn't expecting to get the shot like that, but the ball movement was excellent," Houston said. "We were finding the open man and it was just about execution."

The Timberwolves attempted to set up Stephon Marbury, who forced the overtime with a rainbow jumper from the baseline with 2.2 seconds left in regulation. Marbury took a pass from Kevin Garnett, drove to the basket and had the shot swatted out of bounds by Marcus Camby with seven-tenths of a second left.

On the ensuing inbound play, Garnett was open in the lane but missed a quick shot as the buzzer sounded.

Houston scored 22 of his 26 points after halftime for New York. Johnson finished with 22 points and Patrick Ewing added 20 points and 11 rebounds for New York.

Garnett had 25 points and 14 rebounds. Smith added 20 and 16 for Minnesota, which had a four-game winning streak snapped.

Marbury collected 20 points, nine rebounds, nine assists and nine turnovers.

New York's Charlie Ward went head-to-head with Marbury and had 18 points and 13 assists with five turnovers.

Minnesota (8-3) could have equalled Utah for the best record in the NBA with a victory. Instead, New York (also 8-3) erased a 16-point first-half deficit to get its first win in four games against teams with winning records.

"Tonight was a big test for U.S. and we stood up to the challenge," said Ewing.

In Chicago, Bulls first-year coach Tim Floyd finally gave the United Centre fans something to cheer about when he celebrated his 45th birthday with an ejection in a 98-80 loss to the Philadelphia 76ers.

With 10:16 remaining and the losses and frustration mounting, Floyd took out his anger on referee Bill Spooner, drawing two technical fouls in about 10 seconds.



Houston Rockets' forward Scottie Pippen slam dunks over Atlanta Hawks' Mark West (41) and Tyrone Corbin (33) during the second quarter of their game at the Compaq Center in Houston (Reuters photo)

ons.

After being ejected, he came onto the court to continue the argument and directed several expletives at Spooner before leaving to an ovation from the fans, who have not seen the Bulls win at home yet this season.

The Bulls fell to 0-6 at the United Centre after going 76-6 there the last two seasons. Chicago tied a team record for consecutive home losses set in 1984 — the season before it drafted Michael Jordan.

Allen Iverson scored 33 points for the 76ers (7-5), who have won three in a row following a four-game losing streak.

In Los Angeles, Shaquille O'Neal had 30 points and 11 rebounds as the Lakers (7-6) and interim coach Bill Bertka both moved above .500 with a 115-100 rout of the winless Clippers that snapped a three-game losing streak.

Dennis Rodman, who participated in the pregame shootaround, likely will see his first game action in the second leg of the home-in-home series with the Clippers on Friday.

In Cleveland, Mark

Jackson had a triple-double and the Indiana Pacers choked off the Cavaliers down the stretch to rally for an 81-74 victory, their fifth straight.

Jackson had 15 points, 12 rebounds and 11 assists. Rik Smits scored 20 points for the Pacers, who closed the game with a 16-5 run.

In Houston, the Atlanta Hawks were without the injured Steve Smith and Alan Henderson while Scottie Pippen recorded his first triple-double for the Rockets. Somehow that added up to a 93-87 win for the Hawks.

Grant Long started for the injured Henderson and had 20 points and 10 rebounds. Pippen had 15 points, 11 assists and 10 rebounds for his 17th career triple-double but could not prevent the Rockets' first home loss in five games.

In Washington, Chris Webber posted a triple-double in his homecoming with 17 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists as the Sacramento Kings snapped a three-game losing streak, 115-105 over the Wizards.

Webber, who led the Wizards in scoring and

rebounding last season, made his first appearance at the MCI centre since being dealt to the Kings in the off-season for guard Mitch Richmond and forward Otis Thorpe.

In Vancouver, Jason Kidd recorded his fourth triple-double of the season with 14 points, 12 rebounds and 16 assists as the Phoenix Suns rallied for a 94-86 victory over the grizzlies.

Kidd posted his second straight triple-double and 23rd of his career. He added six steals for the Suns. He had been the only NBA player with a triple-double this season until Webber. Jackson and Pippen joined him Thursday.

In Dallas, Gary Trent scored eight of his 18 points during a decisive fourth-quarter run and the Mavericks got their first back-to-back wins this season, 90-81 over the Denver Nuggets.

The Nuggets, who were denied a three-game winning streak, were dealt a blow when rookie centre Raef LaFrentz, the third overall pick in the 1998 draft, injured his left knee early in the first quarter.

Tigana weighs up his future

NICE (AFP) — Former France midfielder Jean Tigana said Thursday he could quit football in a fortnight but added that he would go abroad if he decided to stay in the game.

Tigana stepped down as coach by French First Division side Monaco in January after a mediocre season and categorically ruled out taking a job at First Division leaders Bordeaux.

Media reports said that TV Channel M6, in talks with Bordeaux, wanted Tigana to work for the club to develop the relationship between the team and the TV company.

But Tigana said: "There is no question of me going to the Girondins (Bordeaux)."

He added: "Either I quit football for good or I will go to a foreign club."

Tigana said he was currently dividing time between his family and his vineyard.

As a player Tigana was a great star for Bordeaux and also featured for Lyon and Marseille. Notably he was a member of the legendary French international midfield that won the 1984 European Championships alongside Alain Giresse, Luis Fernandez and the peerless Michel Platini.

Following the resignation of World Cup winning coach Aimé Jacquet last summer, Tigana was one of two coaches headhunted to take charge of the France side. Auxerre's Guy Roux was the other.

But neither club would give permission to the French Football Federation (FFF) to approach the manager and in the end the FFF moved for Jacquet's No. 2, Roger Lemerre.

Australian IOC member leaves to face Olympic probe

SYDNEY (AFP) — Australian IOC member Phil Coles was on his way to Switzerland Friday to face a inquiry into the Salt Lake City Olympic bid scandal as new evidence emerged contradicting an explanation he has given.

Documents released by the Salt Lake City Organising Committee included details of a visit it organised for Coles, his partner and family to an exclusive ski resort six months after it won the bid to host the 2002 Winter Games.

Coles has insisted it was a private trip at Christmas, 1995, and that he was a guest of U.S. IOC delegate Jim Easton at his Deer Valley condominium.

But the Australian newspaper on Friday quoted Easton as denying he hosted the visit by Coles, adding: "I don't know why he's saying that, but he didn't."

"I'd hate to get him into trouble, but the only time

Phil Stayed at my condo was in February or March of last year."

The itinerary of Coles trip, which the bid committee said cost more than \$9,000, detailed skiing excursions, three dinners with senior bid officials and a New Year's Eve party with Atlanta Games Chief Billy Payne and disgraced bid leader Tom Welch.

Coles, a former Olympic kayaker, has denied any wrongdoing and threatened legal action against the ethics committee investigating the bribes scandal out of Salt Lake City and against the media.

He issued a statement Thursday saying IOC rules did not apply to visits outside the bid, whether before or after, and any suggestion of impropriety in the December 1995 visit was unfounded and wrong.

ABC Radio reported Friday that among 68 pages of material released by the Salt Lake City Organising

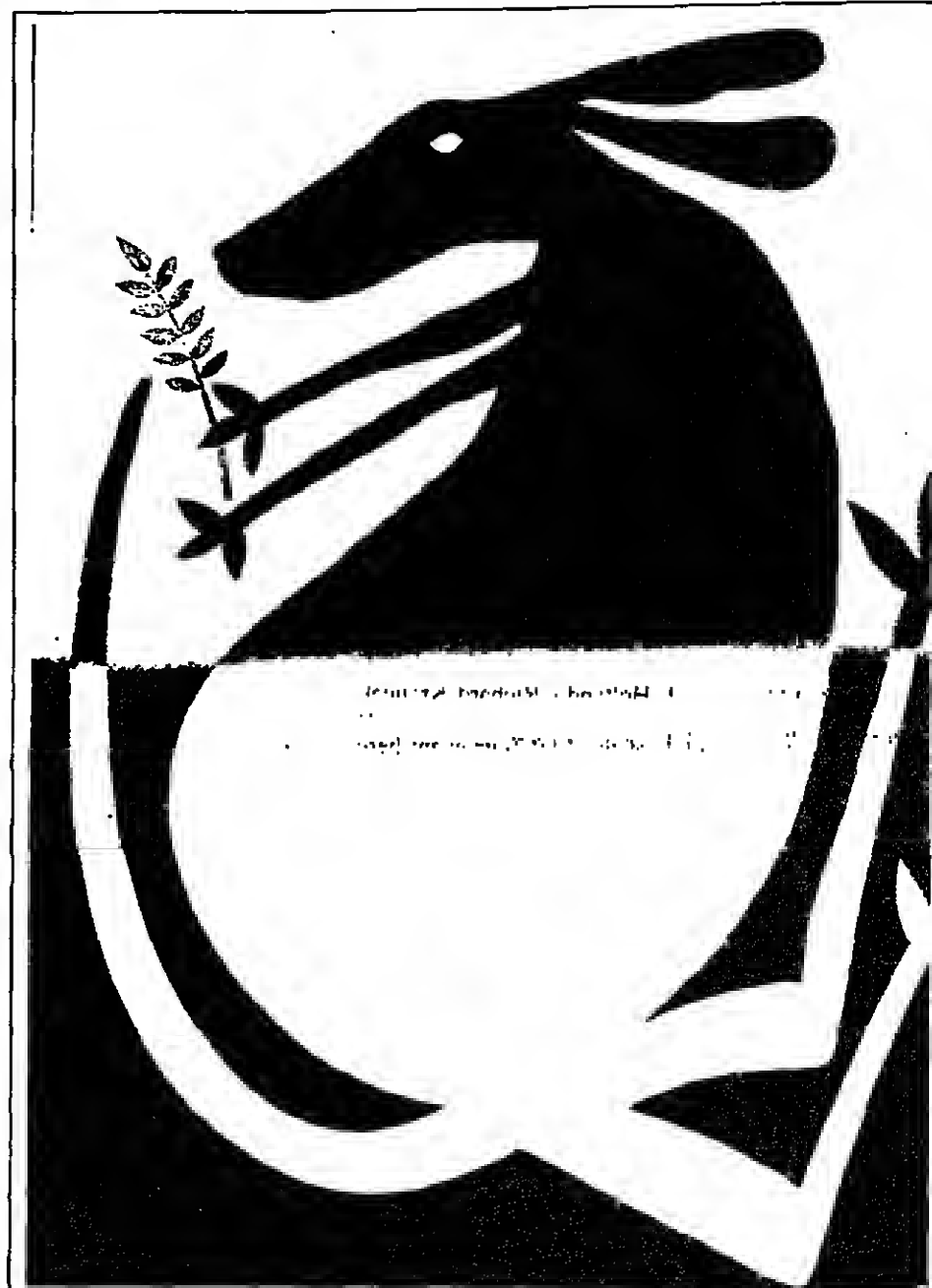
Committee are thank you notes from Coles for the hospitality offered by the organisers.

A letter from Coles dated March 1993 refers to "warm and friendly people, wonderful hospitality, basketball, skiing, snowmobiling, who could ask for more?"

Receipts for thousands of dollars in free accommodation, complimentary basketball tickets and meals were also released.

Olympic sources here said Coles had left for Lausanne to answer questions by the IOC committee, headed by IOC Vice President Dick Pound, which is holding informal hearings in Lausanne over the weekend to consider the future of 10 IOC members implicated in the scandal.

He told reporters from Lausanne that Coles was expected to be one of the IOC members coming to Lausanne at the weekend.



'Peace Roo' features on a poster designed by David Lancashire to symbolise reconciliation with Australia's Aborigines for the new millennium at the official launch of the limited edition Sydney 2000 Olympic posters in Sydney. The eight new SOCOG posters represent the distinctive styles of some of Australia's leading artists such as Michael Leunig, Ken Cato and Paul 'Mambo' Worstead (AFP photo)

Olympic Games rot reflected in Atlanta

ATLANTA (AFP) — A 100-year-old centennial Olympic park pecan tree meant as a symbol of longevity has died of rot, an ironic summing up of the current state of crisis in the Olympic movement.

The 22.7-metre tree, one of 90 that have perished from disease in 953 days since the Olympic torch was lit here, was replaced.

Whether or not the International Olympic Committee's dry rot will end with a little pruning or require drastic measures is still unknown, as is Atlanta's role in a bid corruption scandal that was uncovered in Salt Lake City.

Ten IOC members are out and a dozen more are under investigation after Salt Lake officials spent \$1.3 million on cash payoffs, lavish gifts, paid holidays and other excesses to win the 2002 Winter Olympics.

Here, despite admitted rule breaking by an ex-Atlanta organising and bid committee member plus secrecy surrounding bid expense records, the United States Olympic Committee plans no probe into the 1996 Games.

In response to an IOC request for information on the Atlanta bid, the USOC has said there was no wrongdoing and it plans no probe into Atlanta organisers' activities.

"I hate to say what happened in Atlanta isn't as important as what happened in Salt Lake, but I don't think there is anything we would learn about Atlanta that would materially change the landscape," said USOC lawyer Scott Blackmun.

"Our money is better spent on athletes and programmes than it is on a whole new investigation of an organisation that doesn't exist anymore."

It does, but with a new name. The Georgia Amateur Athletics Foundation directors are the same people assembled for the original bid. Co-chairman Billy Payne was the organising committee chairman for the 1996 Olympics.

Payne has refused to release documents detailing

the successful \$7.8 million bid for the centennial summer Olympics, saying no other games records are public and that some comments could cause embarrassment.

The Atlanta constitution reported Thursday that the foundation paid Payne \$975,000 for his personal collection of Olympic memorabilia, with more than \$600,000 used to pay off debts incurred when he was the volunteer bid leader.

That non-paid work led

Payne to an organiser's post that paid him \$519,000 in 1991 up to \$767,000 in 1996, while such chummy payouts as his memorabilia sale are similar to deals that eroded the credibility of Salt Lake organisers, forcing four to resign.

The USOC's refusal to investigate comes in the wake of comments by Charlie Battle, a former bid and organising member now in downtown development who said Atlanta's effort included gifts over the IOC

price limit and flights for more IOC officials' family members than allowed.

"We felt we conducted our bid in the spirit of what we felt like were the guidelines given to us," Battle said. Of IOC members he said, "these people require, some of them especially, a good bit of care and feeding."

Atlanta has its legacy from the Games. The former Olympic stadium has been renovated into a major league baseball park now named Ted Turner field and

includes a giant soft drink bottle advertisement.

The city has more hotels, larger highways and new or renovated sport and housing areas. Turner's hotel property jumped in value after the centennial park was built next door.

NBC, which paid \$3.5 billion for U.S. Olympic broadcast rights to the next five Olympics, had a ratings bonanza with a U.S. Games.

Having the Olympics in a U.S. city gave a boost to the nine of 11 major global sponsors who are U.S. based, each of whom pays \$40 to \$50 million every Olympiad to use the Olympic rings in advertisements.

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	RONIN	G.I. JANE	AL ZA'EEM	RONIN	DR. DOLITTLE	THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MARY	CLOSED FOR DECORATION
	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:15, 3:15, 6:30, 9:45	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30 CONCORDE "2" Alwad Mahrous Tba'a Al Wazir	Shows: 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	

Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.

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Pantani hits out
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Burns takes lead
in Safari Rally

SAFARI (AFP) —
Burns
lead in the
Rally from Subaru
Julia
Kobayashi of Finland
Friday.
Burns
led in the top of the
leaderboard after the
leading section
won at Nairobi and lies
a second ahead of
Spain's Carlos Sainz. But
world champion Tommi
Makinen suffered another
setback to his hopes
of a third straight victory
this season and a seventh
title for his Mitsubishi
team. Makinen, who won
the first two rallies of the
season in Monte Carlo and
Sweden, lost a massive 12
minutes after suffering
punctures in both rear
tyres at the same time on
the dusty, potholed roads
in East Africa.

Schumacher
completes
'Grand Prix'

SCARFRIA (AFP) —
Michael
Schumacher
completed five days of
testing at Mugello on
Thursday with a success-
ful simulation of a Grand
Prix at the wheel of
Ferrari's new F399 car.
Schumacher completed
three sets of 20 laps of the
Tuscan circuit, inter-
persed with two stops for
both fuel and tyres.
Teammate Eddie Irvine
was meanwhile busy with
a photo session. The
1999's final workout will
be on Sunday at Fiorano
with test driver Luca
Badoer, before the cars are
packed off for Australia.
The 1999 Formula One
season gets underway on
March 7 at Melbourne.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Taipei, S. Korea enter Fed Cup Group One final

BANGKOK (AFP) — Chinese Taipei and South Korea will meet in the final of the Fed Cup Asia/Oceania Group One on Saturday after they won all their first round ties here. The winner of the Chinese Taipei-South Korea tie on Saturday will advance to the World Group Two/regional qualifying play-off in July. In the Asia/Oceania Group Two competition here, Singapore finished top of Pool A and Kazakhstan finished second. Tajikistan and Pakistan finished first and second of Pool B when the qualifying round was completed on Thursday. In Friday's play-offs to determine who advances from Group Two to Group One next year, Singapore beat Pakistan 2-1, and Kazakhstan defeated Tajikistan 3-0.

Pantani hits out at Tour de France route

MADRID (AFP) — Italy's Tour de France champion Marco Pantani hit out at this summer's route to keep the cycling public guessing over his participation in the 1999 race. The 29-year-old, nicknamed "il pirata" because of his shaved head, earring and colourful handkerchiefs, is a natural climber but said this year's event favoured time-trialers. "I won the tour last year with a course which was not favourable to me. I hoped for a better route this year but it wasn't the case," Pantani told Madrid-based newspaper as on Friday. "The tour is the most important in the world and because of that it must take the riders into account," he added.

Burns takes lead in Safari Rally

NAIROBI (AFP) — Britain's Richard Burns took the overall lead in the Safari Rally from Subaru teammate Juha Kankkunen of Finland early on Friday. Burns moved to the top of the leader-board after the 105km timed section south of Nairobi and lies half a second ahead of Spain's Carlos Sainz. But world champion Tommi Makinen suffered another massive blow to his hopes of a third straight victory this season and a seventh in a row for his Mitsubishi team. Makinen, who won the first two rallies of the season in Monte Carlo and Sweden, lost a massive 12 minutes after suffering punctures to both rear tyres at the same time on the dusty, pot-holed roads of East Africa.

Schumacher completes 'Grand Prix'

SCARPERIA (AFP) — Michael Schumacher completed five days of testing at Mugello on Thursday with a successful simulation of a Grand Prix at the wheel of Ferrari's new F399 car. Schumacher completed three sets of 20 laps of the Tuscan circuit, interspersed with two stops for both fuel and tyres. Teammate Eddie Irvine was meanwhile busy with a photo session. The 1999's final workout will be on Sunday at Fiorano with test driver Luca Badoer, before the cars are packed off for Australia. The 1999 Formula One season gets underway on March 7 at Melbourne.

Humbert sets new pole vault world record

STOCKHOLM (AFP) — Germany's Nicole Humbert set a new women's indoors pole vault record Thursday evening, posting a 4.56m leap.

It beat the former mark of 4.55m, set by Australia's Emma George in Adelaide last year.

Mozambique's Maria Mutola had earlier set a new world indoor record here in the 1000m.

Mutola posted a time of 2:30:96 — the previous best was 2:31:23, also set at Stockholm by the same athlete.



German Nicole Humbert celebrates after setting a new women's indoors pole vault world record, at the indoor meeting, posting a 4.56m leap. It beat the former mark of 4.55m, set by Australia's Emma George in Adelaide last year (AFP photo)

Van Roost advances in Paris

PARIS (AFP) — Dominique Van Roost of Belgium, a finalist twelve months ago, beat her jinx opponent Elena Likhovtseva for the first time in five meetings to reach the semi-finals at the \$520,000 Paris Indoor Open on Friday.

The third-seeded Van Roost, who had lost all four of her previous matches against the 23-year-old from Kazakhstan, finished with a flurry after a nervous first set to score a 7-5, 6-0 victory.

She now plays either World No. 1 Martina Hingis of Switzerland or sixth-seed Amelie Mauresmo of France for a place in Sunday's final.

Van Roost, who has been enjoying a great start to 1999 by reaching the final at Auckland and then a second career grand slam quarter-final at the Australian Open, was beaten in last year's final here by Mary Pierce.

Pierce, who is nursing a shoulder injury, is not defending her title.

Van Roost became the first Belgian player to be ranked in the world's top-ten last season. She is currently ranked eleventh.

Likhovtseva, who is playing sixth event of 1999, was a semi-finalist in Hanover last week.

Krajicek moves into semis

LONDON (AFP) — Holland's Richard Krajicek cruised into the semifinals of the ATP Tour event here on Friday, beating Slovakia's Karol Kucera 6-1, 6-3 in just 53 minutes.

The fourth seed thus proved he is back to the sort of form that brought him the Wimbledon title in 1996.

Kucera had no answer to Krajicek's powerful serve and failed to force a single break point on the Dutchman's service. In contrast Krajicek fired down 13 aces against the fifth seed.

It marked a return to form for the 27-year-old, who has struggled with knee problems over the last two years following his triumph at Wimbledon's All England Club.

On Thursday, British No. 2 Greg Rusedski restored British fortunes at the ATP event in Battersea Park after compatriot Tim Henman's disappointing exit late Wednesday night.

Third seed Rusedski prevailed 6-3, 7-6 (7/4) in 81 minutes against former Australian Open champion Petr Korda in what was something of a grudge match.



Richard Krajicek

Russia's Yevgey Kafelnikov moved within one victory of depositing American Pete Sampras as World No. 1 when he breezed past Zimbabwe's Byron Black 6-3, 6-2 in a one-sided affair. Kafelnikov will become

the first Russian to top the standings if he wins his next match with Sweden's Thomas Johansson.

Johansson had earlier beaten Italy's Davide Sanguinetti 6-0, 6-7 (3/7), 6-2 to book his spot in the last eight.

Davenport, Seles among 10 selected to U.S. Fed Cup squad

WHITE PLAINS, New York (AFP) — Lindsay Davenport, Monica Seles and sisters Venus and Serena Williams were among the 10 players selected to the 1999 United States Fed Cup team, captain Billie Jean King announced Thursday.

King also announced that Davenport, who missed the semifinal loss to Spain last year, will play in the first-round match against Croatia in Zagreb April 17-18.

Lisa Raymond, Chanda Rubin, Amy Frazier, Corina Morariu, Tara Snyder and Mary Joe Fernandez round out the U.S. Fed Cup pool, which is comprised of the top 10 ranked American

players.

"The concept of team sports is very important to me, and Fed Cup is the pinnacle in women's team tennis," King said. "By naming this squad of top Americans for Fed Cup, we can assemble the best teams for each tie. We are putting all of our efforts into bringing back the Fed Cup to the United States before the year 2000."

Davenport, currently ranked second in the world, has been a member of the U.S. Fed Cup team since 1994 and played on the 1996 title-winning team. She has compiled a 21-2 lifetime record in Fed Cup play, including two wins in last year's first-round sweep of

the Netherlands.

Last year, Davenport captured her first grand slam singles title at the U.S. Open and became the No. 1 player in the world on October 12, holding onto the top spot until February 7.

Seles has gone undefeated in eight Fed Cup matches, all in singles, and was a member of the 1996 championship team. She has won nine Grand Slam titles, reached the final of last year's French Open and the semi-finals at last month's Australian Open.

The Williams sisters were members of last year's team, but did not compete.

Domestic aperitif before midweek Euro feast

PARIS (AFP) — A series of appetising clashes in Italy, Spain and Germany this weekend does not disguise the fact that many of the clubs will have one eye on the midweek European programme that follows.

Top of the hill is Italy is the San Siro clash between Champions' League hopefuls Inter Milan and Juventus. Meanwhile, Fiorentina face a stormy trip to Salernitana and Lazio will be battling to stay top when they face

should be easy prey for Sven Goran Eriksson's men.

Strikers Christian Vieri and Chilean Marcelo Salas are both fit for Sunday, although Argentinian midfielder Matias Almeyda is doubtful.

Inspired by their first spell at the top for 25 years, Eriksson believes

league isn't lost. Seven points isn't that much of a gap."

But the Welshman might also be thinking ahead to the midweek Champions' League showdown with Dynamo Kiev. He will be aware that former Real Madrid boss Jupp Heynckes was sacked last season after leading

Hansa Rostock, a side they have beaten in their last five encounters.

Rehagel has acute injury problems even though the German season only resumed last season after the winter break. Strikers Olaf Marschall and Uwe Rosler are both ruled out. At Bayern, Mehmet

EUROPEAN SOCCER PREVIEW

a new era is dawning. "Lazio don't have the same image as Juventus, Inter and AC Milan — who have all that history behind them," he said. "But it's our job now to change the course of history."

Of the two clubs who are joint second on points, AC Milan travel to as Roma Saturday while Fiorentina go to Salernitana for a match policed by 1,000 officers — more than triple the usual number.

Fiorentina were kicked out of the UEFA Cup last November after their match in Salerno against Swiss side Grasshopper was suspended following a firecracker explosion which injured the referee.

The attack, hatched by a group of local youths, is believed to have been retaliation for crowd trouble in Florence two weeks previously.

In Spain the focus is on new Real Madrid boss John Toshack, when he begins his second stint with the World Club champions.

He replaces Guus Hiddink, sacked this week, but Toshack is adamant the primera liga is not a lost cause even though the "Merengues" trail leaders Barcelona by seven points.

Toshack said: "The

real to their first European title in 30 years. The reason — poor domestic form."

Real travel Saturday to Seville to face a Real Betis side struggling to hold its own in midtable.

The visitors will welcome back Fernando Redondo after three months out with injury.

Barcelona, meanwhile, hope that lightning doesn't strike twice when they face Valencia, who knocked them out of the Spanish Cup in midweek.

After flopping in Europe, Barcelona can now put all their eggs in the championship basket.

Mallorca, three points behind Barca, host Tenerife Sunday afternoon while Celta Vigo welcome athletic Bilbao on Saturday.

In Germany, with Bayern Munich 10 points clear in the title race, once again the domestic games pale into significance as the hype builds up for Bayern's Champions' League showdown with defending Bundesliga champions Kaiserslautern.

Otto Rehagel's red devils have an extra day's rest, playing VfB Stuttgart Friday evening, but face the more testing fixture.

Bayern must travel to

Scholl is hoping the long trip to Rostock will see his comeback after almost 10 months away with various health problems. France's programme was played in midweek with Marseille and Bordeaux again playing musical chairs at the summit.

Bordeaux could only draw 0-0 with Nantes while a 47th-minute Robert Pires goal was enough to give Marseille top spot by a single point. It is the ninth time the lead has changed hands between the two this season.

Monaco saw off Montpellier 3-2 with David Trezeguet and new signing from Lens Wagneau Eloi among the scorers although Montpellier deserved credit for fighting back from 3-0 down.

But anxiety continues to grow in the French capital as high-speeding Paris St. Germain once again lost at the Parc des Princes. A late penalty from Lyoo's Alain Caveglia, after PSG goalkeeper Dominique Casagrande had brought down Vikasb Dhorasoo, ensured a 1-0 win.

The trapdoor to division two is becoming more than a remote possibility for the city of light's only top-flight side.

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Ocalan lawyer resigns over fears for his life

ANKARA (AP) — A lawyer for imprisoned Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan resigned Friday, saying he feared for his life. Police detained a second member of the legal team for suspected ties to the guerrilla group.

The moves were likely to stoke Western worries about the fairness of Ocalan's upcoming treason trial, which could get the Kurdish leader the death penalty.

Police in Istanbul detained Osman Baydemir, one of 115 lawyers who has volunteered to defend Ocalan, citing previous arrest orders for alleged links to the Kurdish rebel organisation.

Lawyer Ahmet Zeki Okcuoglu said he was resigning because "my life is in danger and I am unable to do my job."

Ocalan's capture has set off patriotic fervour throughout Turkey and Okcuoglu said he has received death threats against himself and members of his family.

On Thursday, Turkish ultra-nationalists stoned a bus carrying Okcuoglu and other lawyers to the island prison where Ocalan is being held.

"I am not being protected by the state whose duty it is to protect us," Okcuoglu said. "I could be killed anytime."

Okcuoglu said other members of Ocalan's legal staff feared for their lives and are considering resigning.

Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit

criticised the lawyer's decision.

"There have been small groups who have staged demonstrations, but the state immediately took measures," Ecevit said.

"The demonstrations do not in any way threaten the lawyers."

Human rights groups repeatedly have criticised the Turkish justice system and specifically the state security courts where the Ocalan trial is to be held.

The three-member court tribunal must contain a member of the military, which is waging a 15-year-old war against Ocalan's Kurdish Labour Party, or PKK. The conflict has killed 37,000 people, mostly Kurdish civilians and guerrillas.

Ocalan was denied legal counsel for the first 10 days after his capture in Nairobi, Kenya, by Turkish commandos.

Okcuoglu was allowed to visit his client for the first time on Thursday but said soldiers wearing ski masks remained in the room while he spoke with Ocalan.

He said he was only allowed to ask Ocalan questions about his health and an official present during the 20-minute meeting took notes on what was said.

As part of an intensified crackdown on Kurdish groups, the constitutional court banned a small pro-Kurdish political party, ruling that it violated the constitution's principle of

national unity. The Democratic Party of the Masses was formed in 1997 with the aim of promoting a peaceful solution to the Kurdish conflict.

The larger pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democracy Party also faces closure by the same court for alleged links to Ocalan's group.

Thousands of its members have been rounded up in the past week.

In one of the most violent attacks since Ocalan's capture, suspected PKK activists opened fire on a coffee-house in southeastern Turkey on Thursday, killing three people and wounding five, the semi-official Anatolia news agency reported.

The capture of Ocalan outside the Greek embassy in Kenya has worsened already tense relations with Greece.

On Friday, the Greek Holy Synod denied Turkish reports that Greek churches helped fund Ocalan's guerrilla movement.

"The church of Greece, the church of love and peace, is neither harmed by nor will be occupied with these pre-packaged falsified statements by the Turkish propaganda-makers," the Holy Synod said in a statement.

Many Greeks sympathise with Ocalan's fight for autonomy against their traditional rival, Turkey. Athens has denied that it supported the rebels.



Ocalan's defence lawyers Friday leave the Press Museum by taxi immediately after a press conference in Istanbul. Ahmet Zeki Okcuoglu, a defence lawyer for Ocalan, resigned, saying he feared for his life and that of his family. Police detained one of Ocalan's lawyers, Osman Baydemir, as he arrived for the press conference (AP photo)

Turkey attacks Greece over Ocalan aides

ANKARA (R) — Turkey's foreign ministry on Friday attacked Athens for flying three women aides of captured Kurdish guerrilla chief Abdullah Ocalan to Greece, saying it amounted to continued "support for terrorism."

"This action shows that Greece has not taken the necessary lessons from the situation it has fallen into because of its support for terrorism until now," ministry spokesman Sermet Atacanli said in a written statement.

The three women were flown to a military base near Athens on Thursday after being stranded at the Greek embassy in Kenya following the seizure of Ocalan by Turkish special forces last week.

The women, who had refused to leave the embassy without assurances for their safety, were among the last people to see Ocalan before he was captured. Greece had sheltered him for 12 days at its Nairobi embassy.

It organised the trio's exit after getting written assurances from Kenya and ensuring European Union diplomats were observing the operation.

Atacanli described the women as PKK militants and said Greece needed to understand that on the issue of terrorism, "the door of persuasion was closed."

"Greece must clearly and immediately cut its links with terrorism in order to become a country with which there can be normal relations," Atacanli said.

Majority of Israelis ready to cede Golan for peace — poll

TEL AVIV (AFP) — A majority of Israelis are willing to return the occupied Golan Heights to Syria to reach a peace accord with Damascus and end the conflict in Lebanon, according to a survey published Friday.

Fifty-five per cent of those queried answered yes when asked if they were "favourable to an agreement with Syria which would involve a withdrawal from the Golan Heights and a resolution of the Lebanon crisis."

The poll, published in the Maariv newspaper, found that 35 per cent of Israelis opposed a withdrawal from the Golan Heights, which Israel occupied in 1967 and illegally annexed in 1981. Ten per cent had no opinion.

Syria has made a full return of the Golan Heights its central condition for signing a peace agreement with Israel.

Negotiations between the two sides were suspended ahead of Israeli elections in May 1996 and have not resumed under the right-wing Israeli government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who opposes a Golan pullout.

The Maariv survey was conducted after three Israeli army officers were killed Tuesday by Lebanese guerrillas outside the self-declared "security zone" Israel occupies in south Lebanon.

Israel accuses Syria of backing the Islamist guerrillas as a way of pressuring Israel to resume peace negotiations on a withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

Syria is the dominant political and military power in Lebanon.

A large 63 per cent majority in the Maariv poll accused the Netanyahu government of "not doing enough" to resolve the Lebanese conflict, which each year sees at least 20 Israeli soldiers killed over the border.

Only 29 per cent said Netanyahu was taking the necessary diplomatic steps and eight per cent had no opinion.

The same survey found that 53 per cent of Israelis however oppose a unilateral Israeli withdrawal from the south Lebanon "security zone," fearing such a move would leave northern Israel vulnerable to cross-border attacks.

Thirty-five per cent believe Israel should pull its troops out and defend the north from the international border. Twelve per cent were undecided.

Since the latest Israeli losses in south Lebanon, Netanyahu and other members of his government have acknowledged that a solution to the Lebanon conflict must involve negotiations with Syria.

But the prime minister continues to insist Syria drop its condition that the negotiations resume where they left off under Israel's previous Labour Party government — with an agreement in principle to trade the Golan Heights for peace.

The poll was conducted among 560 adults and had a margin of error of 4.5 per cent.

Iraq submits report to U.N. arms panel

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — In a shift of position, Iraq has submitted a report to a U.N. panel examining the disarmament of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, the panel chairman said Friday.

Until now Iraq had refused to cooperate with the panel, whose initial session winds up Saturday. Ambassador Celso Amorim said.

"The fact that they presented the document is in itself the beginning of a dialogue" with Iraq, Amorim told reporters after updating the U.N. Security Council on the first four days of panel discussions.

The Iraqi government has described the panel as a "waste of time" and a "procrastination" by the Security Council which would only delay the lifting of U.N. sanctions linked to disarmament.

Western diplomats said Amorim told council members behind-closed-doors that the Iraqi move was an "important step" in the process of re-establishing a dialogue between Baghdad and the 15-member council.

Amorim said the "weighty" Iraqi document, to be discussed on Friday, gave Baghdad's views as to the status of the disarmament files being reviewed by the 20-member panel.

The panel was briefed this week by members from the U.N. Special Commission and International Atomic Energy Agency on efforts to eliminate Iraqi nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, and long-range missiles.

UNSCOM accuses Iraq of continuing to conceal elements of its germ warfare and chemical arms programme from the U.N. inspectors who pulled out of Baghdad ahead of U.S. and British air strikes in December.

Iraq has vowed that the U.N. inspectors, accused of working for U.S. and Israeli intelligence, will never return.

In a further sign that Iraq is prepared to resume cooperation, Baghdad has invited Amorim to travel to the Iraqi capital in his personal capacity.

But Amorim said that he could not "dissociate my person from the role I am playing now as chairman of the panel."

Israel promises quick trial for American teenager Washington angry over refusal to extradite murder suspect

TEL AVIV (R) — Israeli Justice Minister Tzahi Hanegbi on Friday promised a speedy trial for an American Jewish teenager accused of a grisly murder in Maryland but admitted it was nearly impossible to prosecute crimes committed abroad.

To Washington's dismay, Israel ruled on Thursday against extraditing Samuel Sheinbein, 18, to the United States to face trial for the killing of 19-year-old Alfredo Tello, whose dismembered body was found in a garage near Washington in September 1997.

"It has become clear that the existence of such trials outside the borders of the state where the crime was committed makes it nearly impossible to carry out justice and it involves unusually high costs," Hanegbi told Israel Radio.

"Since the decision of the supreme court, the state of Israel will [now] pool all the necessary resources in order for there to be a speedy and effective trial," Hanegbi said.

Israel's Channel Two television said Sheinbein would be indicted in a Tel Aviv district court on Monday.

Sheinbein fled to Israel after Tello's body was discovered and was arrested by Israeli

police soon after his arrival. Before the killing Sheinbein had never lived in the Jewish state. He claimed citizenship through his father, who was born in Israel but settled in the United States in 1950.

Israeli law stipulates that citizens of Israel cannot be extradited. The supreme court on Thursday overturned a lower court decision that although Sheinbein was a citizen, he had never lived in Israel and so was subject to extradition.

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Attorney General Janet Reno both intervened in the high-profile case and urged Israel to

hand over Sheinbein. Reno said on Thursday her department would do its utmost to ensure justice would be served in Israel against Sheinbein, adding that it would have been preferable if he had been tried in the country where the crime was committed.

The victim's mother called the Israeli court's decision "ridiculous" and appealed to Americans to campaign to bring Sheinbein back to the United States for trial.

"Americans don't understand... why Israel is not prepared to extradite its citizens for trial in the United States. After all, we provide fair trials

for Jews and everyone else," said Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz in an interview with Israel's Channel One television.

Tello's murder was one of the most gruesome reported in the Washington area in several years.

Police found a circular power saw and several cylinders of propane gas in the garage near the victim's dismembered body, which had been burned almost beyond recognition.

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Lawyer for Yemeni Britons says he was beaten, threatened

LONDON (AFP) — The British lawyer of eight Britons standing trial in Yemen on terrorism charges claimed Friday that he had been beaten, abused and threatened by security forces there.

Returning to London after three weeks in Yemen, Rashad Yaacub told a news conference that he had been beaten to the point of passing out, slashed with keys and warned with a gun to his head to leave the country.

He called on Prime Minister Tony Blair and Foreign Secretary Robin Cook to intervene on behalf of the British Muslim detainees, saying they had been repeatedly tortured.

Yaacub was arrested Monday as he tried to see the

suspects who, along with two Algerians, were detained in late December and early January.

Yemeni authorities claim they were sent by London-based Islamist firebrand leader Abu Hanzala Al Masri to bomb several British and U.S. targets in Aden. The suspects say they were there on holiday and to learn Arabic.

"I was assaulted repeatedly by one of the prison guards," Yaacub said, and a set of keys was scraped across his chest.

"On the ground I was physically stamped on. A Kalashnikov was held to my head and I was told if I kept speaking out to the press and making trouble I would be shot."

He said he fainted after more beatings, was grabbed by guards who "pushed my head into the sink and then into the toilet," and passed out.

He was taken to hospital and visited by British Consul David Pearce. Later he was forcibly sedated, Yaacub added, realising only dimly that someone then grabbed his thumb and put his print on a blank official document.

The lawyer said he was accused of false identity, having no identification with him, being part of the opposition and making statements to the press.

However when the Yemeni government heard what had happened, it ordered his release, and the next day he was allowed to see the

Britons.

The detainees also claim they have been tortured, some of them sexually abused, and that confessions have been forcibly extracted from them.

Yaacub urged the British government to intervene on their behalf and investigate the allegations.

"Having been through an element of what these poor boys have been through, having suffered physically the persecution, the verbal and physical abuse and then being strung up on charges which were clearly preposterous, surely that is evidence, testimony, to what could happen to other Britons," he said.

The detained suspects are Malik Hartra, Mohsin

Ghailan, Shahid Butt, Samad Ahmad, Ghulam Hussein, Mohammad, Mustapha Kamel — Al-Masri's son — Chaz Nabi and Iyadh Hussein.

Two Algerians are being held with them. Ghulam Hussein's wife Monica Davies said it was "a living nightmare. Every time I wake up I'm still in the nightmare."

"What is it going to take for the British government to intervene on their behalf?" she demanded, saying she had seen the scars of torture herself.

The Foreign Office said it had already taken up the allegations of torture with Yemeni authorities, and dismissed charges that it was not doing enough.

Kuwait holds military parade as liberation remembered

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Tanks, rocket launchers and personnel carriers rumbled down Kuwaiti's fashionable streets Friday to celebrate the eighth anniversary of the end of Iraqi occupation but for many people thoughts turned to relatives still missing from the Gulf War.

"Kuwaitis have never forgotten our missing," said student Mohammad Al Azemi, as soldiers squatted under orange trees nearby to shelter from the unseasonably hot weather.

"Everyone in this country either has a POW as a family member or knows someone who does. They are part of our history," he said, slowly driving his yellow Chevrolet, draped in the Kuwaiti flag, in the parade.

"It is just a way of saying that we will never forget our POWs until they are all returned safe and sound," he said.

Yellow is the colour of remembrance for prisoners of war (POWs) and others missing since the 1990 Iraqi invasion, and dozens of antique American-model cars, all painted yellow, inched along in the back of the procession.

Mashael Mourad, whose

brother was arrested and taken to Baghdad on the second day of the invasion, said Thursday the international community should do more to remedy the situation.

"The only thing that might bring Iraq to cooperate is international pressure," she said.

"Some 600 Kuwaitis remain unaccounted for and U.N.-sponsored talks to secure their release collapsed after last December's U.S.-British bombing campaign on Iraq. Many analysts think there is little hope of tracking them down."

Duail Al Enizi, who heads the campaign for the release of Kuwaitis POWs from Iraq, has called on Baghdad to speed up the search process and the flow of information concerning those missing.

"We request that Iraq reveal immediately the names of those POWs who are still alive and those who are not," he said.

A U.N. Security Council resolution, adopted after a U.S.-led coalition expelled Iraqi forces here, called for the return of all Kuwaitis missing or POWs.

U.S. State Department slams China, others in annual human rights report

WASHINGTON (AFP) — China's human rights record worsened sharply in 1998, the State Department said Friday in its annual human rights report, citing "widespread and well-documented" abuses.

The annual survey, more than 5,000 pages long this year, also took aim at continued and worsening abuses around the globe, from Afghanistan, Myanmar, Colombia and Russia to Indonesia, Serbia, and Sierra Leone.

But the longest single report addressed abuses in China, where the State Department noted an abrupt end to the loosening of curbs on freedom of expression and association begun in 1997 and 1998.

While taking some steps to assuage foreign critics such as signing in October the United Nations Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, China "gave no indication when the covenant would be ratified," it said.

Serious abuses also intensified over the last year in areas populated by ethnic minorities, notably in remote Tibet and Xinjiang, the report said.

The central authorities meanwhile continued to detain Gendun Choeylo Nyima, whom the Dalai Lama designated in 1995 as the 11th Panchen Lama, the second-highest leader in Tibetan Buddhism, along with his family.

While local observers say he and another child selected for the post by Beijing were well cared for, the report said "the government has not allowed international observers the access necessary to confirm this."

The government also released several well-known dissidents before their jail terms ended, though several thousand others remained in jail at the end of 1998 for peacefully voicing their political views.

"The government's human rights record deteriorated sharply beginning in the final months of the year with a crackdown against organised politi-

cal dissent," the report said, citing "widespread and well-documented human rights abuses, in violation of internationally accepted norms."

"These abuses stemmed from the authorities' very limited tolerance of public dissent aimed at the government, fear of unrest, and the limited scope or inadequate implementation of laws protecting basic freedoms."

Such abuses include extrajudicial killings, torture and mistreatment of prisoners, forced confessions, arbitrary arrests and detentions, long incommunicado incarceration, and denial of due legal process, it said.

Another Asian giant in the throes of unsettling economic and social upheaval, Indonesia, drew a decidedly mixed review.

South Korea's elected president, former dissident Kim Dae-Jung, marshalled support for painful economic reforms even as Indonesians chafed and protested under a similar programme imposed by their appointed leaders.

"These events confirmed, even in times of economic crisis, that 'Asian values' are consistent with respect for democracy, human rights, and the rule of law," said Koh, who is himself Korean American.

India drew criticism for significant

abuses, including acute problems in the disputed northern state of Kashmir, while grave Pakistani police abuses such as murder and torture went essentially unpunished.

The report also took aim at Russia for routinely torturing detainees while thousands of prisoners die in jails each year as a result of beatings, overcrowding, and sickness.

But it ascribed much of the blame for Russian abuses to the country's acute financial crisis, which hampered the ability of officials there to enforce their own laws.

In Serbia, President Slobodan Milosevic used state organs to strangle dissent and promote a "brutal" crackdown on civilians and insurgents in the ethnic Albanian province of Kosovo.

In Myanmar, the ruling junta in power since 1988 tightened curbs on political dissent, while North Korea, reeling from food shortages and a shrinking economy, still used brutal

repression to silence dissent. Cuban President Fidel Castro continued to exert control over all aspects of Cuban life, despite a highly publicised visit by Pope John Paul II in early 1998.

In the Middle East, Iraq continued executing political opponents of President Saddam Hussein, while Syria used its vast security apparatus to quash dissent and Libya used summary executions to suppress human rights.

In Africa, the report accused Sudan and Equatorial Guinea of vicious and widespread human rights abuses, while ongoing conflicts worsened abuses in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, government and rebel forces committed extrajudicial executions, torture, beatings, and rape. In Sierra Leone, "rebel forces killed and maimed with extraordinary cruelty," it said.

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killed in ambush...
Nearly 50 arrests...
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Eight killed in...
Dhaka slum fire...
At least...
seven...
killed...
Saturday...
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